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61st year of publication

Iraq: all options exhausted?

Harry der Nederlanden

In Iraq, it seems, every time you think the news can't get any worse, it does. The month of Ramadan, Muslim holy month, did not bring joy or relief to the people of Iraq. Sectarian killings not only continued, but escalated, especially in Baghdad. This, despite a large influx of extra troops about a month earlier. U.S. troops also took a beating: 86 soldiers were killed in October alone. But over 2,660 Iraqis lost their lives to suicide bombings, roadside bombs and executions. Not only are Shiites and Sunnis killing one another, recently a fierce gun battle erupted between the two major Shiite factions.

As Iraq devolves into ever greater violence, and the Bush administration and the military look for ways to avert all-out civil war, the voices in America calling for a drastic change of course increase in number. Pointing out the folly of the invasion and the failure of U.S. policy in the Middle East has become a major industry in the publishing world. Calls to withdraw U.S. troops from an increasingly hopeless venture to bring law and order to the country are coming not just from the Democrats but also from former Bush supporters.

Senators from both parties called on Bush to pressure Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki to disarm and disband militias. Others urged that the U.S. threaten the Iraq government with wholesale withdrawal if it doesn't meet certain benchmarks.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld showed that the administration is feeling the pressure. He said that Iraq must take over responsibility for its own security "sooner rather than later."

Rumsfeld

"The biggest mistake," he said, "would be not to pass things over to the Iraqis, create a dependency on their part, instead of developing strength and capacity and competence."

The New York Times published a story claiming that the administration was drawing up a timetable for the Iraqi government, but the White House denied it.

The question is: does the government of Iraq possess the authority and power to do what is being demanded of it? Many analysts believe that al-Maliki's power does not extend very far. Large areas of Iraq answer not to the central government but to sectarian or militia leaders.

In mid-October Shiites went on a two-day rampage in Balad, a town north of Baghdad, virtually cleansing the town of Sunnis. It was another case of escalating violence. Local Shiites retaliated for the murder of a police officer by killing two Sunnis. Then Sunnis, described as al-Qaeda, rounded up 17 Shiite farm workers and beheaded them. Instead of calling in the Iraq army, the locals called upon the militia of Moqtada al-Sadr to avenge them. The next morning several busloads arrived from Baghdad and warned all Sunnis to leave the city, but before the Iraqi army arrived they had slaughtered 80-100 people. And although the army restored order, life in Balad will never be the same.

In Amara, a city of about 250,000 deep in Shiite territory, the fighting was not between Shiites and Sunnis but between two Shiite militias – the followers of al-Sadr and those loyal to the largest Shiite party. After the arrest of a Sadr leader in Amara, the capital of Maysan Province in the south, Sadrist militia overran police stations, leaving 30 dead. For a time they controlled much of the city, agreeing to withdraw only after Iraqi troops arrived.

Moqtada al-Sadr has publicly denounced all religious killing, whether of Sunnis or other Shiites, calling on his followers to instead resist the American occupation. But it is unclear whether he always controls those who swear loyalty to him. All analysts agree that for law and order to come to Iraq the militias will have to be disarmed, but in the present spiral of killings and terror, no faction wants to surrender its weapons while others still have theirs.

General George Casey, the top U.S. commander in Iraq, called for more troops to be assigned to Baghdad to quell the bloodshed. He also said that U.S. troops would be needed for the next 12 to 18 months, which sounded like good news to those who had projected a longer stay and bad news to those who looked for a swifter drawdown of troops. Many analysts don't see any prospect that the violence will decrease. On the contrary, a few weeks prior to the month of Ramadan, the stay of a large number of American troops was extended so that 6,000 more could be stationed in Baghdad. Despite a large increase in patrols, however, violence in Baghdad has escalated.

More Iraqi troops and policemen have also been assigned to Baghdad. Bt this doesn't always result in more law and order, because both are riddled with men whose loyalties are not to the central government but to various factions. They only add to the death squads and to the violence.

In an interview with *Newsweek*, Phyllis Bennis, of the Institute for Policy Studies, said, "We should get out. We are making things worse."

She believes the presence of U.S. troops in the country is only escalating the level of violence – and many Iraqis agree. Resistance to the occupation is providing an umbrella excuse for all manner of violence. Once that excuse is removed, she thinks, some of the sources of violence will also be rooted out: "...if the troops are gone, that whole sector of broad, popular resistance will be ended. Then it will be possible to do what can't be done now: to identify the terrorist forces...and eliminate them as a fighting force by the Iraqis themselves." Perhaps.

When she says "pull out," she means quickly and without setting benchmarks or leaving troops stationed in bases to provide back-up.

To the objection that this will plunge the country into chaos, she replies it is already in chaos. Moreover, no one can predict with any accuracy what will happen if the U.S. withdraws.

Every pundit has his proposal and every analyst his angle, of course. Of the many analysts and pundits who supported the invasion

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News

Africa after war: Paths to Forgiveness

Why Jeannette employs her family's killers

Abraham McLaughlin

BUTARE, RWANDA – A tall, slender Tutsi woman named Jeannette Nyirabaganwa has at least 100 perfectly good reasons never to speak to Anastaz Turimubakunzi again.

That's how many of Jeannette's relatives, including her husband, parents, and baby, were killed during the 1994 genocide that raced through her hometown here in Africa's midsection. Anastaz is a confessed killer who, Jeannette says, helped murder her husband.

Yet Jeannette does, in fact, speak to Anastaz regularly. She even pays him – along with other Hutus who killed her relatives – to work on her coffee farm. Increasingly, their uneasy partnership is paying off: The beans they grow and pick together are being sold, along with those of many other Rwandan coffee farmers, to Starbucks and other high-end US coffee purveyors, creating growing prosperity for her, him, and others.

Jeannette's explanation of how she can stand to work alongside such men is utterly pragmatic: After genocide laid waste to Rwanda, she says, "The only solution was to go together with my countrymen" – even the killers. "There was no alternative."

This is a tale of Rwandan-style reconciliation. It may seem almost incomprehensible to outsiders, yet in some cases it works here.

It's driven largely by economics: Coffee is Rwanda's biggest export. To get the beans grown, harvested, and processed, both killers and victims from the genocide are striking an uneasy peace born of economic codependence. "They need each other to make that container of coffee," says Timothy Schilling, a coffee consultant, referring to steel shipping containers that are packed with beans and shipped overseas.

Jeannette may employ the man she says helped kill her husband, but she hasn't forgiven him – or even begun to forget what happened.

It started Sunday, April 10, 1994, when her husband ran to find her and declared, "The killings have started." The two of them, together with their 4-month-old baby, eventually fled into the courtyard of a medical clinic in town. Trapped with about 300 others, they came under attack, she says, by extremist Hutus who lobbed grenades into the courtyard. The trio survived. But they slept atop dead bodies for several days.

When a rainstorm came, the killers finally left. Her family ran. As they fled through town, Hutu women and children would shout and point, she says, "as if there was an animal." They were calling for killers to catch her family.

After hiding with a sympathetic Hutu relative for a few days, she and her husband decided to split up to try to avoid detection. Jeannette headed back to town with her baby. But a Hutu gang intercepted her, beat her, and raped her. She fell unconscious. Waking up after a few hours, she says, "I found the child next to me, dead."

When she later discovered her husband's body, she says, it was being eaten by dogs.

Finally, she gave up: "I waited for someone to come and kill me." But when a gang of Hutus found her, the leader declared, "It's bad luck to kill someone who's almost dead. She has no husband and no child. She's not going to survive." They left her.

But for weeks she did survive, scrounging for roots and fruits in a ravine near her family's coffee farm. Finally, in July, now-President Paul Kagame's Tutsi-dominated rebels arrived and saved her and others. She soon discovered that only a handful of her family members had made it: "All of a sudden, everything was gone."

In retelling the horrific story today, Jeannette seems, outwardly at least, calm. She doesn't shed any tears. But that, she explains, is a choice. "When you are crying, the killers are feeling proud," she says in a low, defiant tone. Besides, with most of her family gone, "I have no one to cry with."

Call it trickle-down reconciliation.

After the genocide – in which some 800,000 people were killed in just 90 days – Rwanda's Tutsi-dominated government proclaimed, "We are all Rwandans," and created a climate of extreme political correctness. It's now taboo even to utter the words "Hutu" and "Tutsi." The aim is to quash any public mention of ethnicity – and therefore any recurrence of violence – while focusing on economic growth that will benefit both Hutus and Tutsis. It's the Rwandan equivalent of President Reagan's economic approach: Create a rising economic tide to lift all Rwandan boats – and float them away from the jagged rocks of ethnic conflict. "The more people have a house and a car, the less reason they have to throw a stone at someone," explains Shyaka Kanuma, editor of *Focus*, a private newspaper in the capital, Kigali.

Yet the strategy is risky. It leaves little room for direct dialogue about why ethnic tensions exploded – and how a recurrence can be prevented. Government-sanctioned "gacaca" community courts aim to bring justice and reconciliation – and ostensibly provide a forum for dialogue – yet they are overwhelmed with cases and are seen by some as one-sided and biased. In general, "There is no reconciliation going on – Hutus still hate Tutsis, and Tutsis still hate Hutus," says one political analyst who asked not to be named because of the taboo against speaking so frankly. More ethnic killing is "inevitable," he adds, if political leaders fail to spread the country's wealth equitably.

Indeed, the threat of violence from both sides still looms. This extremism is "like a lion who is asleep," says one human rights activist who also asked not to be named because of the sensitive nature of her comments. "But when he is hungry, he will wake up." This hunger, she adds, is fueled by economic inequality. By this analogy, Rwanda's challenge is like trying to feed a lion while it sleeps – and hoping it doesn't wake up.

For five years after the genocide, Jeannette rarely spoke. She had few people to talk to and little to say. She avoided the killers, who still lived in town. Afraid of reprisals, they avoided her, too.

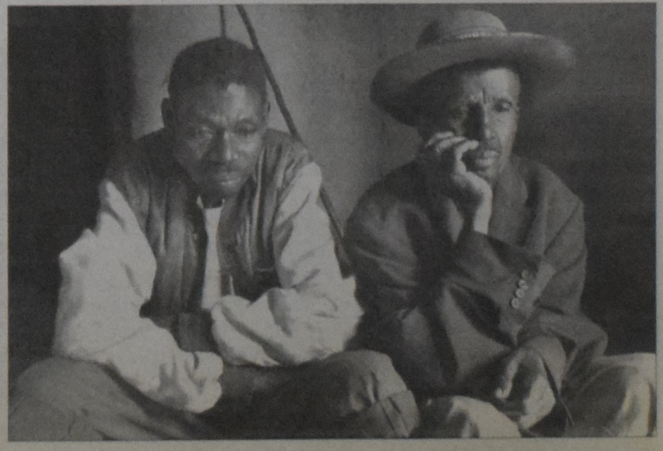
But by 1999, a group of neighbors had decided to start a coffee cooperative. For decades, local coffee farmers had sold raw beans to middlemen at low prices. Now the cooperative wanted to help farmers keep more of the profits.

Jeannette decided the time was right to join the Abahuzamugambi cooperative. She had inherited her dead relatives' coffee farms, and she was looking for help in making the fields productive and profitable. Yet her decision was based on more than money. After five years of isolation, "I thought that coffee-growing could connect me to other people," she says. It was also a way of honoring her family, which had grown coffee for generations: "Coffee can help me remember the relatives."

Some Tutsis wouldn't join the cooperative – whose name roughly means "growing together" – because it included Hutu killers. But for Jeannette, it was a lifesaver. If it hadn't come along, she says, "I would have gone mad."

Soon she had business relationships with people who killed her family members. Then, to her surprise, in cooperative meetings, bits of truth would emerge about what had happened in 1994. Jeannette says several people – both Hutus and Tutsis – told her Anastaz was part of a group that had killed her husband. At first, "If I had a gun, yes, I would have killed him," she says. But, living on her own, she feared reprisals: "I had no one to protect me."

As years passed, the cooperative prospered – linking into the $20-billion global "specialty coffee" market, which includes roasters like Starbucks. The cooperative now even sells its own brand – "Maraba Bourbon" – at retail stores in Britain.



Over the years, Jeannette began to separate killers' past deeds from their current contributions. "This doesn't change the emotions," she explains, "but it does help me interact" with them. Through the cooperative, she says, "We've been building a relationship that changed our lives. We ended up reconciling in a way we didn't know."

Rwanda's economy is expanding quickly. And coffee exports are helping fuel it.

Since 1995, the country has often achieved 7 percent annual growth. This year, coffee surpassed tea as the country's biggest export, bringing growing prosperity to the country's 500,000 coffee farmers. One group of 20,000 farmers saw revenues of about $800,000 last year, says Dr. Schilling, a Texas A&M professor, who runs a US-funded initiative called the Partnership to Enhance Agriculture in Rwanda through Linkages (PEARL). It helps connect Rwandan farmers with high-end overseas buyers. This year's harvest was better than last year's, so the 12 cooperatives expect about $2 million in revenues. Roughly 85 percent of profits go to the farmers, whose average coffee-related annual incomes have jumped to $400 in 2006, up from $75 in 2001, Schilling says.

In the spring of 1994, it was as if the government had promised Anastaz a kind of lottery jackpot in return for killing people.

If this poor farmer – and millions of other Hutus – would help kill all the Tutsis in Rwanda, the genocide-era government pledged that they would have riches, land, and security. And they wouldn't have to work again.

"During the genocide, everyone was planning to take properties and kill – but not have to work," Anastaz says, remembering when then-President Juvenal Habyarimana came to a nearby town and told Hutus they wouldn't be prosecuted for killing Tutsis.

It clearly didn't work out that way.

Sitting on a crude wooden bench in a two-room house with a dirt floor, Anastaz begins quietly shaking and sweating as he talks about the genocide. A trio of baby white rabbits hops around his feet. He's raising them for food. A machete sits within arm's reach.

Anastaz has publicly admitted to killing two people during the genocide – and has spent seven years in prison for the murders. In many cases, Hutus who resisted killing Tutsis were harassed, hurt, or killed for not pitching in. Asked if he was involved in killing Jeannette's husband, his eyes widen, he blanches, and stays quiet. Yet later, he hints he did more than he has admitted to, saying, "The punishment is not big enough for the crimes I committed."

Yet he also blames the previous government for his terrible acts. "We were just implementing," he says. "There was a policy" that every Tutsi "found in his or her home would be killed." It was a perversion of traditional Rwandan culture, which has long thrived on communal labor. Indeed, for centuries, groups of villagers have tackled projects that one person alone couldn't do. During the genocide, the "project" was killing. "It was like we were doing a community activity," says Karori Murwanaskyaka, a Hutu sitting with Anastaz.

But now, "We are feeling guilty and very bad for what happened," says a clearly repentant Anastaz.

These days, unlike before the genocide, there are no promises of easy riches. And Anastaz says it's better that way. "The economy is different," he says, "We don't have war. And we're getting money." During the two-month harvest, he and others make about 80 cents a day picking coffee. Now, "someone can work and save, and everyone has the right to own properties."

A simple handshake says volumes.

Jeannette is standing outside Anastaz's house on a rutted dirt road. Before leaving, she walks over to say goodbye, extending her hand. But she doesn't face him directly – or look him in the eyes. He, however, faces her and carefully takes her hand in both of his. Expressions of regret and pain flash across his face. After an awkward moment, she manages a smile and steps away.

Because of what he did, she says later, "I feel so bad to shake hands with that man." Yet, even she says his murderous acts weren't entirely his fault.

"I have to shake hands with this man, because such people were innocent. It wasn't their will," she says. "It was an ideology raised by the government."

Despite the government's promises of wealth, she observes, he's still mired in poverty: "He looted many properties, but he's still poor." With a tone of indignation, she adds, "I mean, can you imagine? He lives with rabbits." Jeannette, meanwhile, has become increasingly prosperous. She lives in a tidy three-room house in a wealthier area.

In the end, the proximity of victims and killers in this crowded country – along with the strong hand of government preventing further mass violence – has forced a grudging, practical reconciliation. On certain hillsides, coffee has become an enabler for this fragile unity.

And, for Jeannette, the initial economic pragmatism has evolved into a budding empathy she might have once thought impossible. Still referring to his poverty, she says simply, "I have to employ him. I know how he lives."

Rwanda's 'gacaca' courts

Across Rwanda, a traditional form of justice is being meted out every day. The country's 12,000 "gacaca" – or "under the tree" – courts tackle smaller genocide-related crimes, such as looting and indirect involvement in killing. National and international tribunals prosecute those responsible for organizing the 1994 genocide. For instance, the UN's International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda – holding court in nearby Tanzania – is slowly trying those accused of masterminding the genocide.

Back in Rwanda, locally elected "gacaca" judges collect testimony from victims and encourage perpetrators to confess and apologize. Their task is enormous: An estimated 600,000 people had some role in the genocide. "Gacaca" courts are expected to hear about 100,000 cases – although that could mushroom to 500,000 as early testimony implicates new suspects. Although empowered to sentence wrongdoers to prison, the courts will reportedly soon be sentencing at least 55,000 to community service instead.

Supporters say it's an ideal forum for dialogue about the horrors of 1994. But critics say it only reprimands Hutus while ignoring the misdeeds carried out by Tutsis.

At a glance: justice after the genocide

- Decades of ethnic tensions between Rwanda's dominant Tutsi minority and the majority Hutus exploded in 1994 when Hutus – apparently following government orders – killed about 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus within 90 days.
- In 2001, traditional "gacaca" courts – in which ordinary Rwandans judge their peers – began to hear genocide cases.
- Last year, the government began a mass release of 36,000 prisoners, most of whom have confessed to involvement in the genocide. It is the third phase of prison releases since 2003.
- The UN International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda has rendered 30 genocide judgments since the first trial in 1997.

– The Associated Press, BBC

Abraham McLaughlin is a staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

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Editorial

So many witnesses

Harry der Nederlanden

There's an awful lot happening in our world and a host of different opinions about what they mean. It all sets our heads spinning sometimes – so much so that we'd rather not hear about it or think about it. As the editor of *CC*, of course, I have to keep up with the latest events and keep sniffing the wind for trends old and new. But I too am sometimes overcome by a sort of vomit reflex. How on earth can one make sense of it all? How do you bring a Christian perspective to bear on this whirl of complex events when not even the brightest minds and recognized experts can agree on what to make of it?

Last week, I wasn't sure I had the time to make the drive to Hamilton to hear a speaker for Christian Stewardship Services and to Toronto to attend the ICS convocation. But I made the time and heard speakers that took the whirl out of my head. They reminded me that we're not called to rise to a God's-eye view of what's going on in this world. We quite simply aren't capable of climbing that high.

I published Peter Glover's commentary on the Muslim veil issue, a hot issue that was discussed in every newspaper, magazine and television news show here and abroad. Then I added some of my own observations that diverge quite a bit from Glover's. I wanted to bring out another facet, not to display my own superior insight, but to underline how complex such issues are. Christians equally motivated by a desire to shed the light of their witness on contemporary events can come to quite different interpretations.

This doesn't mean that one is attuned to the truth – God's truth – and the other isn't. It doesn't mean that one is in touch with the Holy Spirit and the other isn't.

Some of you may be muttering under your breath, "Tell me something I don't already know!" But especially the Reformed community has been haunted by the discrepancy between the unity of God's truth and the splintering of Christian thought and action in the public sphere. Many Christians see the offense in the splintering of the church, but we are also bothered by the huge diversity of Christian efforts in every other sphere of life.

Some *CC* readers, for example, have been buoyed by the Christian witness of George Bush and have supported many of his policies. For others George Bush exemplifies everything that is wrong with American Christendom: they would even hesitate to call it Christianity. We see Jim Wallis and his *Sojourners* magazine firmly aligning themselves against the policies of George Bush and company, while Charles Colson and his considerable organization throw their weight behind most of his policies. The polarity in Canada is often not so pronounced, but it is there as well. While the United Church and Christians in the New Democratic and Liberal Parties defend the right of same-sex couples to get married, evangelicals and Christians in the Conservative Party work furiously to reverse Canada's redefinition of marriage. In the pages of *CC* several women have lamented the failure of CRC Synod to stand up for the equality of women, but there are still many in the CRC who are convinced that Scripture calls for male leadership in the church.

Spirit-driven men and women, galvanized by God's revelation in Scripture, are working in very different situations in seemingly different directions. Doesn't the work of one tend to cancel out the work of the other? Doesn't the witness of the one contradict the witness of the other?

At the Christian Stewardship Services meeting marking the 30th anniversary of that organization, the speaker was Jonathan Wellum, a deeply committed Christian who often speaks to leaders in business and finance to bring them back to the plumbline of God's norms for human life. He moves among the well-to-do and influential advising them how to put their considerable gifts to good use. Gerald Vandezande has also rubbed shoulders with the powerful, but especially in recent years he has been a tireless advocate for the poor and marginalized in our society. As I listened to both men, I was struck by the very different emphases in their speeches even though both share a common vision. In his speech Wellum pointed for inspiration to conservative evangelicals like Charles Colson and Albert Mohler, both of whom have made appearances in *CC*. And he expressed his appreciation for Harper's Conservative government. In the speech at his reception, Gerald mentioned as sources of inspiration figures like Desmond Tutu, Martin Luther King, Mother Theresa, Oscar Romero and Tommy Douglas, to name only a few. There were a number of emphases in Wellum's speech that I'm quite sure would have made Gerald squirm – and no doubt vice versa as well.

Jonathan Wellum spoke about "entrepreneurial stewardship." His address sketched out a framework for visionary leadership. One of its central emphases was that a Christian believer takes an optimistic view of things in this world. He knows that all the gifts and resources entrusted to him are not his own but belong to God. They are entrusted to his care so that he can use them creatively to multiply wealth as in the parable of the talents. We are called to be entrepreneurs with our talents, gifts and wealth – to take risks with what has been entrusted to us. Wellum challenged us to think big, to set priorities, and to commit ourselves to ultimate purposes in harmony with God's total truth. We may have the confidence to be adventuresome and to take big risks to shape history in accordance with the vision of God's truth because God has promised to bless and to increase such investments of our talents.

This summary of Wellum's speech is very incomplete and doesn't do it justice, of course. I've focussed on some of the themes that made me squirm a bit. They fit a bit too neatly with that version of American Christianity that celebrates capitalism and entrepreneurship and promises big dividends to those who think like prosperous, well-disciplined, purpose-driven businessmen. It struck me as the kind of speech you can give to a well-to-do middle class audience in an affluent nation with lots of possibilities in a free-market economy.

Maybe I have been oversensitized by numerous critiques of capitalism and the overemphasis on "getting back what you give" by the preachers of the gospel of wealth. Wellum did distance his view of entrepreneurial stewardship from that teaching, for he stressed that God's blessings do not always come in kind: he may also bless us with hardship and suffering for our own good.

In the speech at the reception given in his honor (see next page), Gerald sounded the notes that he has been playing for many years: he called for a political engagement, "... which consistently advocates and practices life-embracing compassion, equity, justice, peace, and solidarity, [and] can work to eliminate injustice and violence. This inclusive, integral approach can help to build a mutually caring and sharing society. It does not tolerate exploitation and oppression. It seeks co-operation rather than confrontation. It is non-partisan in its partisanship for the poor. And it boldly appeals to the consciences and hearts of all citizens and politicians alike to introduce equitable laws, policies and practices that promote 'peace, order, and good government'."

A lot of Gerald's themes – selfless commitment to the common good, solidarity with the poor, a politics of compassion – many of us associate with the left and with intrusive government programs. So the vision he holds before us would seem to clash with that of Wellum.

But read this excerpt from Gerald's speech:

"Ecumenical, multi-faith, non-partisan, passionate political engagements need allies and friends, not adversaries and enemies. We don't need opponents; we need proponents. Indeed, as Jesus' followers, we are always called to be and live for something worthwhile. We are not against this, that and the other thing. We are for integral human growth in the service of a flourishing community of communities that becomes a genuine mosaic of multicultural and multifaith partners in the ongoing effort to promote the gentle reign of justice and peace....

"We are meant to be people of hope in common search of a hopeful, responsible citizenship. We are challenged to be bringers and doers of the Good News. And the Good News is always appealing. As Dr. H. Evan Runner alerted us, we are people of the thesis, not the anti-thesis. Our basic point is not that we are against war and violence (of course we are) – we are for peace and shalom. We are not, first of all, anti-Bush or anti-anyone else. Instead, we develop and propose alternative ways of life."

That's a huge and risky venture. All his life Gerald was a social and political entrepreneur, investing all his talents to bring to realization a witness to God's Kingdom and shalom. When we take a close look at Wellum's vision of stewardship, we also detect purposes radically at odds with those of the typical capitalist. The ultimate purpose he envisions is not bigger profits and a more powerful corporation, but the flourishing of all human talents, from the artistic to the academic and the economic, in a way that will benefit all.

I'm not suggesting that all our differences can be resolved in this world. We will continue to quarrel over vision and strategy, and we will draw from different traditions and use different rhetoric. We don't yet see the whole. But that's not necessary for faithful obedience. Accepting the grace given us, we need only serve God according to our best lights. And, thank the Lord, he has given us a lot of bright lights – not just Gerald Vandezande and Jonathan Wellum, but John Suk, Albert Mohler, A.A. van Ruler and a host of other saints who witness to the goodness of God.

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News/Letters

Hope-filled advocacy for Public Justice

Love is the Better Way

The Institute for Christian Studies, one of the many organizations to issue from the vision that Gerald Vandezande (pictured here with his wife Wynne) expressed so eloquently, was privileged to recognize Gerald's tireless work in several organizations by awarding him an honorary Doctor of Letters Degree. We won't rehearse here once again his achievements, but we join the ICS in thanking the Lord for raising up people like him and join in honoring his witness by publishing his comments on that occasion.

PAUL HUBBLE

Gerald Vandezande

As a long-time Canadian citizen by choice, and an independent, public-justice advocate by profession, I am most thankful for having enjoyed the privilege to be meaningfully involved in the path-breaking initiatives and ongoing witness of Citizens for Public Justice since 1963.

Jesus tells us:

Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of God.
Blessed are those who mourn,
for they shall be comforted.
Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.
Blessed are those who hunger and
thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.
Blessed are the merciful,
for they will receive mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called the children of God.
Blessed are those who are persecuted
for righteousness sake,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

These biblical teachings are living building blocks that lead to practical steps, concrete ways out of confusion, misery, blind alleys and dead-end streets while on our hope-filled journey, realizing that life is meant to be persistent advocacy for our neighbours' good.

I am deeply grateful to the Institute for Christian Studies for honoring me with this special degree tonight. You have now deprived me of an excuse I have used with people for years, namely that I do not have any academic degree. As an institution of insightful higher learning, together with other respected academics, you face complex economic, educational, political, social, philosophical and theological questions which cannot be avoided with a clear conscience or in good faith.

The Institute and its many colleagues serve as a building block towards a better understanding of how to be of blessing and service in this deeply secularized culture. Our world belongs to God. It needs your wisdom. So does Canada, as it struggles to become a beacon of light, a justice-based democracy, a strong, free and generous nation in the service of humanity, an independent servant in the vanguard for the international common good rooted in justice for all.

I also want to express heartfelt thanks to all the dedicated colleagues and generous supporters of CPJ over the years. They have faithfully worked and willingly shared their deep commitment and diverse resources to help build living demonstrations of public justice, responsible stewardship, social harmony, community co-operation and genuine peace. They steadfastly continue to be dynamic affirmations of living faiths and core values at work in aid of poor and powerless people, and they remain empowering illustrations of active citizenship and solidarity rooted in love and respect for all, without discrimination against any.

I especially want to voice publicly my deep love and warm gratitude to Wynne, my faith-filled marriage partner for nearly 50 years. Wynne, your loving care, Christian commitment, expressed so practically and professionally in your social work and community outreach, has been and still is, a true inspiration. May we be given the health and strength to continue in whatever ways we can be of neighborly service, wherever God provides opportunities to share our expressions of biblical love, justice and peace. Of course, our precious children Janice and Karen and their families are also uniquely supportive.

Let me now conclude in the Biblical spirit that love is always the better way. The apostle Paul declared that the inequitable status quo is unacceptable, morally, politically and economically. He makes clear that we are called "to overthrow the existing order" ("to bring to nothing the things that are"), because it leads to ways of death (1 Corinthians 1:26-31). In this hope-filled advocacy for public justice, and especially in our interdependent world, Canada can serve as a beacon of freedom, justice and peace, inviting others to follow ways of hope, renewal and life. Jesus has shown us what makes for this abundant life.

As Paul writes: Now I will show you a better way....Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.

...These three remain; faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Who are the Jews

Re: "The Canary in the coalmine" by Harry Antonides (CC 09-10-06).

I have to agree with Mr. Antonides' premise that nowadays we do not take the historical context seriously – not only the Israeli side though but also the Palestinian's side. If we do that, the demand of the Iranian President does not seem so outrageous.

Antonides quotes Eric Hoffer from the L.A. Times of 1968: "I have a premonition that will not leave me; as it goes with Israel so will it go with all of us. Should Israel perish, the holocaust will be upon us." He posits this over against the Iranian President Mammoud Ahmadinejad, who said on Aug 29, 2006: "Our position on the Middle east is clear: we want the root of tension removed."

He still wants the Jewish people removed from the area. His argument is: The western world created the problem; let the western world absorb the Jewish people.

Harry writes that the news is printed without historical context, but he makes the same mistake by eliminating the historical background of the inhabitants of the area.

1) Few Jews are Hebrews (although they are reviving the Hebrew language). Neh. 7 :61-61 points to that. They adhered to a religion and had converts added to them.

2) Max I.Dimont writes in *God Jews and History* about Edomites and Galileans being converted by force, and surmises that about 10 percent might have been Jewish (p. 89). He estimates that of the number of seven million adherents to Judaism who were living in the Roman Empire, only an estimated four million were Jewish by virtue of descent (p.113).

According to *World Population History*, after the Bar Kochba revolt A.D. 132-35, Palestine was a Jewish graveyard empty of living Jews (p.142).

Judaism was and still is a proselytizing religion. Solomon Grayzel and Max Dimont quote instances of proselytizing and conversions in their books. Max Dimont intimates a Tartaric people, living in the Kingdom of Kahzars, converted under the vigorous prompting of their King Bulan. Solomon Grayzel wrote: "Early in the sixth century The King of Yemen, Dhu Nowas, and presumably also part of his people, became converts to Judaism" (*History of the Jews*, p. 225). And Arthur Koestler" indicates that world Jewry was of Turkish rather then Semitic descent (*The Thirteenth Tribe*).

The result is that the Judaistic religion was kept alive but influenced by and protected from the country they had fled or converted to but a Semitic race was not.

Thus, the people who came to claim "Israel" in 1948 were totally out of touch with the culture of the Palestinian inhabitants, whose forefathers were put in Palestine by Hadrian after the Bar Kochba revolt and had established themselves there through the centuries.

The "Zionists" came back not to join but to rule.

Fiercely independent people fought them and still do.

According to the books I have read, religion has very little to do with it. While the claim for the land is based on biblical (religious) grounds, the treatment of the inhabitants was very 'unreligious'.

As to the Western press being biased, that goes both ways.

Hezbollah terrorizes but most of their fighters are descendants of Palestinian refugees.

I used mostly Jewish books and hope that my view is 'the whole view' and unbiased. Even though I am 'pro Palestinian,' I do not agree with their reactions.

Jerry Stehouwer, Richmond Hill

Christian Courier

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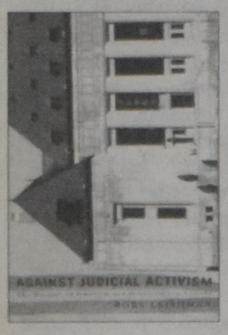
Review

Against Judicial Activism:
The Decline of Freedom and Democracy in Canada

Rory Leishman

McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006
310 pp., $44.95



Reviewed by Harry Antonides

The Charter will never become the main safeguard of civil liberties in Canada. The main safeguards will continue to be the democratic character of Canadian political institutions, the independence of the judiciary and a legal tradition of respect for civil liberties. The Charter is no substitute for any of these things, and would be ineffective if any of these things disappeared. (Peter Hogg, *Constitutional Law of Canada)*

Rory Leishman, a columnist for the *London Free Press*, is here tackling one of the most celebrated innovations of modern Canadian jurisprudence. Adopted in 1982, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in very short order has become the mainstay of the Canadian political and legal order.

A culture of rights and freedoms?

To its admirers the Charter is one of the great accomplishments of Pierre Elliott Trudeau's prime ministership. (Then Chief Justice Antonio Lamer of the Supreme Court of Canada: "... he [Prime Minister Trudeau] made an enormous contribution to the implantation of what I call a culture of rights and freedoms of the person in Canada.")

Leishman is of a different mind. He goes into great detail explaining that rather than reinforcing freedom in this country, the Charter has done the very opposite. His main criticism is that the courts have strayed into the area of policy and law making rather than restricting themselves to the task of interpreting the law. Or to put this in a different way: spearheaded by the Supreme Court of Canada, the courts have changed from a position of restraint to one of activism.

Such criticism hits at what is now widely considered to be a position of enlightenment and progress, and any one who disagrees will have rough going. The great advantage of this book is that the author has built his case by analyzing with meticulous care chapter and verse of what to many sounds like mumbo-jumbo. This is not an easy topic, but *Against Judicial Activism* deserves the careful attention not only of the political and legal practitioners, but it is also quite within reach of the serious non-experts.

The central theme of this book is that the Charter has been hijacked by those who want to fundamentally restructure Canadian institutions and habits in a hurry. The envisioned transformation is not a minor adjustment but one that has enormous consequences for the institutions of our nation and therefore also for the day-to-day lives of every Canadian citizen. Another way of saying this is that the so-called Charter revolution is driven by a worldview that considers the restraints and norms of the past to be roadblocks to true liberation and therefore to be assigned to the trashcan of history.

The defenders of this Charter-driven revolution want to assure us that all they are doing is updating rules and laws that no longer fit our modern age. They claim that what they are doing is bringing about a greater measure of fairness and justice especially for those who in the past have been treated as second-class citizens. But Leishman is not persuaded and insists that a number of time-tested principles of responsible government have been discarded, notably the traditional distinction among the three major branches of government – the legislative, executive and the juridical.

Leishman provides a helpful analysis of all the major administrative and court decisions guided by the Charter. His description of affected individuals, families, churches, schools, businesses, and other social entities is always enlightening and often shocking. He shows that the new court-ordered legislation, ostensibly intended to enhance personal freedom in reality has led to new forms of injustice and discrimination. Here is one such instance of maltreatment meted out to an exemplary Canadian citizen.

Linda Gibbons is a Christian, now a grandmother, who once underwent an abortion and later became a pro-life advocate. For years she has witnessed against the evil of abortion by picketing at a Toronto abortion clinic. Though the Charter rights include freedom of expression, in 1994 the Ontario attorney general issued a court order prohibiting picketing within fifty feet of abortion clinics. Gibbons has insisted on her freedom to maintaining a peaceful and non-obstructive vigil in the immediate vicinity of a Toronto abortion clinic. But this devout, Canadian citizen has spent off and on nearly a total of four years in jail as "a pro-life prisoner of conscience."

Even Alan Borovoy, as general council of the Canadian Civil liberties Association, objected to this "anti-liberal" court order with its broad prohibition against "silent and peaceful information picketing, He wrote: "A restriction against physical obstruction is one thing; a ban on informational picketing is another thing entirely."

Inventing new rights out of thin air

In June 1999 the House of Commons adopted a resolution, by a margin of 216 to 55, confirming that marriage "is and should remain the union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others, and that Parliament will take all necessary steps within the jurisdiction of the Parliament of Canada to preserve this definition of marriage in Canada." But the same Liberal Parliament meekly folded when the Supreme Court "read in" sexual orientation into existing human rights legislation and ordered the redefinition of marriage to include the union of two persons.

Leishman traces the convoluted arguments as these and similar cases wound their way through the rulings of various human rights commissions and tribunals and from there to lower courts, ending up before the Supreme Court of Canada. Previous Liberal governments steadfastly refused to use the notwithstanding clause of the Charter, thereby conceding the supremacy of the courts over the legislators.

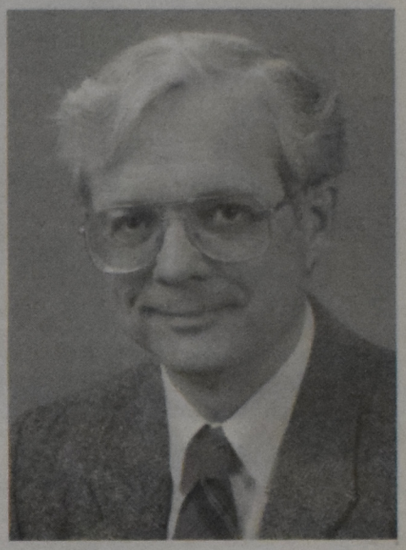
(Section 33 of the Charter provides that Parliament or a provincial legislature may declare that sections 2 and 7 to 15 of the Charter do not apply to certain acts or provisions of these legislative bodies. Such exemption provisions must be renewed every five years.)

Against Judicial Activism at length details the troubles of those who have dared to speak out publicly about their disagreement with the new shibboleths. The long arm of the "rights" enforcers has reached into the lives of many Canadians who simply thought that they were living in a country where they enjoyed freedom of association and speech. Even city mayors were fined and faced potential charges of contempt of court unless they were willing to proclaim gay-pride days. Roman Catholic Bishop Fred Henry of Calgary was hauled before the Alberta Human Rights Commission because of a pastoral letter in which he explained his church's teachings about such moral issues as abortion and same sex marriage.

Leishman finds that the Human Rights "industry" is driven by people with an agenda strongly influenced by a liberal/feminist mindset. Hearings are conducted without careful adherence to the rules and procedures designed to protect the rights of defendants. Often those sitting in judgement have been steeped in the ideology of victimhood but with little regard for the historic context of our common law tradition of freedom and fair play. Hearings and appeals can drag out a case over many years and at great cost.

The Supreme Court of Canada rulings analyzed in this book, in addition to the ones mentioned above, deal with such controversial issues as abortion, euthanasia, education, Sunday observance, pornography, drug testing of employees, Aboriginal land claims and fishing rights, the admission of evidence at trials, refugee and immigration policies, national security, and the right to speedy trials.

Leishman convincingly argues that many of the Supreme Court decisions have serious adverse consequences. A striking



example is the case of the refugee Ahmed Ressam, who lied on his arrival in Canada in 1994. He lived on welfare while involved in crime. But he knew his rights under the ill-conceived Supreme Court decision that all refugees are entitled to the full protection of Canada's Charter. Consequently, Ressam avoided deportation, together with some other 100,000 refugees under a similar order, and disappeared from sight. He came to public attention again in December 1999 when, thanks to an alert American border guard, he was caught with explosives in his car on the way to blow up the Los Angeles airport.

Another disastrous Supreme Court ruling is the one that provides a different legal order for Canadian Aboriginals and for the rest of Canadian citizens. This is a time bomb waiting to explode, for it is impossible to have a united nation with two different kinds of law. Some of the confrontations organized by Aboriginals have been ugly, as is the one now occurring in Caledonia, Ontario. But there is reason to fear that they are only the faint rumblings of much worse to come.

Cutting our roots

In his final chapter "Reviving Parliamentary Democracy" Leishman calls for the rediscovery of the proper division between the function of Parliament and the judiciary. He thinks that legislators are not helpless but should screw up their courage and begin to use the notwithstanding clause of the Charter. After all, this clause was included as a sort of safety valve enabling legislators to assert their independence and their primacy over the courts.

Applying the notwithstanding clause is a serious matter and should never be done unless fundamental principles of the relationship between the two branches of government are at stake. This book provides weighty reasons why now is the time for lawmakers to assume their responsibility by resorting to the notwithstanding clause.

Beans that grow hope

Melanie Stetson Freeman | Staff photographer

BUTARE, RWANDA The "land of a thousand hills" is in the midst of an uphill climb back to normalcy. Known for the genocide that a decade ago claimed 800,000 lives in 100 days as Hutus massacred Tutsis, Rwandans may find that one road to healing leads through their country's thousands of coffee fields, where Hutus and Tutsis now grow their crop – together.

Through a program called PEARL, Partnership to Enhance Agriculture in Rwanda through Linkage, farmers are learning how to produce a top-quality coffee they can sell on the stable gourmet food market, bringing in four times what they made five years ago.

"Our focus is on economic development," says Dan Clay, director of the Institute of International Agriculture at Michigan State University, who created the program. "But in the end, because this program works with communities and cooperatives, these are opportunities for people to work side by side. It has to have an important healing element in it."

Supported by a USAID grant, PEARL teaches farmers how to properly sort the beans for quality, use wet milling at community washing stations, and sun dry them on raised beds.

Hutus and Tutsis are finding they need to rely on each other to succeed in this industry, which employs 40 percent of Rwandans. This country of noncoffee drinkers hopes they will soon be known more for their coffee than for murder.

Judicial Activism *continued*

What this book makes very clear is that the choice we face as a nation is whether to honour and protect the institutions and ideas that have governed this very privileged country, or to cut our ties with the historic moral and religious heritage without which the free nations of the West are unthinkable. The choice is between acknowledging that we are subject to a standard of truth and conduct that is not of our own making, or declaring that we are the autonomous creators of our own values and institutions.

This book is must reading for all who are puzzled, yet are looking for help in making sense out of this increasingly muddled world of legislation and jurisprudence in Canada.

Leishman has performed a yeoman's service by describing in detail the destructive effects of the Charter-driven court decisions on everyday life in Canada. After all, recovery begins with the right diagnosis.

Though diagnosis in itself is not sufficient, it can be, as this book surely is, a big help in clearing the fog of doublespeak that now surrounds the efforts to re-make Canada into a nation without a soul.

Harry Antonides
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Reflections on Stewardship

Rick De Graaf

Legacy: Last Will and *Testimony?*

For this topic of stewardship, I asked my colleague James VanderLaan to address this important aspect of Stewardship. James helped us re-draft our Will and we are grateful for his insights and advice. Edith and I highly recommend his services to you.

Do you have a Will? Is it up to date? Did you write it last year? Five years ago? Twenty years ago? What were the circumstances that caused you to have one written?

In my work at Christian Stewardship Services (CSS) I find that the need for a Will is most commonly addressed when a couple has their first child, a family decides to take a trip overseas, someone close to them passes away which causes them to consider their own wishes, or an older couple begins to think about how they want "their" wealth or blessings to be distributed.

It doesn't necessarily matter what eventually causes you to draft a Will. The important thing is that you have one. A properly drafted Will ensures that the details of your estate can be worked out quickly and easily. Without a Will, the province appoints an administrator, which may result in more of your estate going towards fees and taxes.

We have all heard the common phrase "Last Will and Testament." Did you know that your Will is more than your "Last Will and Testament"? Did you know that your Will is really a *Testimony*? It is a *Testimony* to your values, your priorities and your faith.

The making of a Will is an important act of stewardship. To recognize and acknowledge God as the owner of all things is a fundamental principle of Christian stewardship. Everything that has been entrusted to us by God will be distributed when we pass away and he has given us the important responsibility of deciding who gets what.

Does your Will accurately reflect your values, your priorities in life and your faith? If not, should it?

If you don't have a Will or have a Will needing an update, please look after it right away!

The following is a personal checklist of only a few items that may help you decide if your Will is up to date.

When was your Will put in place? _____/_____/_____ Day Month Year	Does your Will reflect your current wishes? ☐ No ☐ Yes ☐ Unsure
Executor? Who is your Executor? Do they know? Are they still willing and able?	**Guardianship** Who are the guardians for your children? Provisions for children will be provided up to what age?
Distribution of the estate: How will your estate be distributed? At what age will your children inherit? Will it be distributed in a lump sum? Or in a series of payments?	**Distribution of the estate:** Have you considered including Ministry/Charity? Do your kids know of your intentions?
Effects & furnishings How will they be disbursed?	

Before you decide to have your Will drafted or revised, please take the time to pray about these important decisions.

Remember: A Will is for the living. Make it while you can!

If you like, feel free to contact us for further information or assistance – see contact details below.

Stewardly Tip: There are several ways that charitable giving can occur within a Will. A popular strategy that incorporates an act of Stewardship and ensures our children are provided for is the "Child Called Charity" concept. The "Child Called Charity" concept includes a gift to charity equal to the share received by your children. In many cases a gift in a will can often lead to significant tax savings for your estate.

Readers: Share your 'Stewardly Tips' so that we all can make better use of the resources God has entrusted to us. Submit your suggestions and contact information so that we can acknowledge your contribution or ask for more details.

Next issue: Human Impact

Rick DeGraaf works for Christian Stewardship Services in Markham, Ontario Rick's email: rickd@csservices.ca

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50% of Canadians do not have an up-to-date Will.

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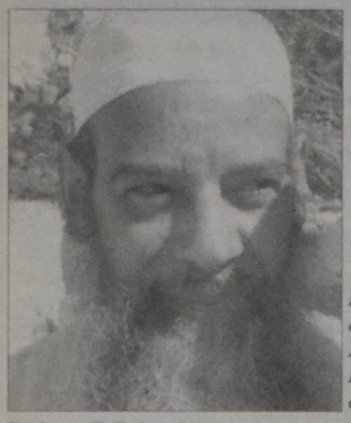
Egypt jails Christian convert from Islam



Bahaa el-Din Ahmed Hussein el-Akkad

Barbara G. Baker

ISTANBUL (Compass Direct News) – A Muslim sheikh jailed in Egypt for 18 months has declared from his prison cell that he is under arrest for "insulting Islam" by becoming a Christian.

Egypt's secret police transferred Bahaa el-Din Ahmed Hussein el-Akkad, 57, to the Wadi el-Natroun Prison last month. He was told he would remain there indefinitely unless he agreed to work as a government informer against other converts to Christianity.

According to the prisoner's Cairo attorney, Athanasius William, his client remains incarcerated in this desert prison "only because he has chosen a different belief, to be a Christian."

El-Akkad was imprisoned without charges for more than a year after officials of the State Security Investigation (SSI) arrested him in Cairo on April 6, 2005.

Although subjected to repeated interrogations, the former Muslim was never told the specific accusations against him. But several of his cellmates spread rumors that he was converting and baptizing people into Christianity, sparking verbal abuse and at least one severe beating from a fellow prisoner.

When the courts finally ordered El-Akkad's release from provisional detention 10 weeks ago, SSI authorities deliberately ignored the ruling. Instead, they held him in their Gaber Ibn Hayyan office in Giza and then transferred him to the Wadi el-Natroun Prison, located 60 miles north of Cairo along the highway to Alexandria.

William told Compass it was strictly illegal for the SSI to have re-arrested El-Akkad and jailed him indefinitely "without the orders of a legally authorized official."

Disillusioned with Islam

In a series of handwritten notes smuggled out of prison in recent months and obtained by Compass, El-Akkad declared that he had "chosen the Christian faith" after years of research on Islam.

For more than 20 years, the former sheikh was a member of the fundamentalist Islamic group Tabligh and Da'wa, which actively proselytized non-Muslims but strictly opposed violence. He also led a mosque community in Al-Haram, in the Giza area adjacent to Cairo. In 1994 he had published, Islam: the Religion, a 500-page book reviewing the traditional beliefs of the Islamic faith.

But he became disillusioned, and five years ago the sheikh said he began to pray that he could somehow know God personally. It was not until January 2005 that he talked for the first time with someone who explained the tenets of the Christian faith to him. He began intensive study of Christian Scripture, and within weeks he became a follower of Jesus.

"This is a proof to all Muslims," El-Akkad wrote, "that the person who studies the two religions from an objective and serious perspective will choose the Christian approach."

But within two months, word of El-Akkad's conversion to Christianity had reached the SSI, and secret police picked him up without warning from his private trade office.

Family waits in vain

After six weeks in SSI detention, El-Akkad was sent to Cairo's Tora Mazraa Prison. When his lawyer, William, finally obtained power of attorney to visit the convert, he was told he was incarcerated under emergency law provisions on suspicion of "committing blasphemy against Islam."

For the following year, El-Akkad's detention was renewed every 45 days under emergency law provisions, even though he still had not been formally charged.

But this past July, authorities instituted a new law restricting provisional detention regulations, specifying that the length of provisional detention for a misdemeanor should not, "whatever the circumstances," exceed six months.

El-Akkad was accused of "insulting a heavenly religion," a misdemeanor under the Egyptian penal code. So a Cairo court ordered him released on July 30.

After learning of the court-ordered release, El-Akkad's wife and three children waited in vain for him to return home. Ten days later, William finally confirmed that although the convert had been released from prison, he remained in SSI custody in Giza.

Desert prison

By mid-September, authorities transferred El-Akkad to the maximum security Wadi el-Natroun Prison, where the majority of Egyptian Islamists sentenced for anti-government activities are incarcerated.

Notorious for its Spartan conditions in the desert, the prison facility houses its prisoners in small cells measuring one by two meters.

According to William, his client is in weak health from prison, suffering from high blood pressure as well as skin diseases caused by extreme temperatures, unsanitary cell conditions and bites from insects and small reptiles.

"He is locked in a place where he may die because his age, body and mind cannot tolerate this cruelty and stubbornness of the state security authorities," William said.

Although Egypt's Christian citizens are free to embrace Islam and obtain legal Muslim identities, Muslim citizens are not allowed to change their religious identity. Those who become Christians are subjected to severe harassment by the SSI, which often arrests converts for either insulting Islam or "threatening national security."

Kenyan church leaders concerned over influx of Somali refugees

Fredrick Nzwili

Nairobi (ENI) – Church leaders are concerned over an influx of Somali refugees into Kenya, but are urging a "compassionate emergency response" for victims fleeing fighting between the Transitional Federal Government and the Union of Islamic Courts.

"As a means of self preservation they have the right to flee," said the Rev. Maloba Wesoga, the administrative secretary of the Roman Catholic archdiocese of Nairobi. "But the government should ensure that by hosting them it doesn't jeopardize security, resources and the general calm."

Indicating the problems that come with an influx of displaced people, a camp run by UNHCR, the United Nations refugee agency, in Dadaab in the north of Kenya has recorded a first case of polio in 20 years. The Kenyan government is now considering a country-wide immunization campaign for all children at a cost of 720 million shillings (US$1-million) and also emergency vaccination at the camp.

"It means polio has re-emerged and we will have to vaccinate our children," the director of Medical Service, Dr. David Nyikal told journalists on October 21 in Limuru near Nairobi.

There are also concerns the refugees pose a security threat, given that many of them have been previously involved in armed combat. But the Rev. Fred Nyabera, executive director of the Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa, urged denominations to respond to refugees' spiritual and moral needs.

"Compassionate emergency response for the victims should not be ignored," Nyabera told Ecumenical News International in Nairobi. "But this should be done in such a way that it balances with the security concerns of the hosting community."

Somalia has a 682 kilometre border with Kenya, and the UNHCR estimates there will be 80,000 new arrivals in the camp by December.

EU-Commissioner: Christians should defend European values

Wolfgang Polzer

WARSAW (ANS) – The European Union's Commissioner for Regional Policy, Danuta Huebner, has called on Christians, churches and religious communities to stay involved in the dialog about the future of the EU.

The Polish politician addressed the General Assembly of the European Evangelical Alliance (EEA) in Warsaw, October 17. The 58-year-old Catholic stressed the need to defend basic values like democracy, personal freedom, human rights, the protection of minorities, the rule of law and the freedom to practice religion. "The responsibility and the future of Europe is our common responsibility," said Huebner. She admitted that the EU has become too far removed from the people. "We must work closely with local people to understand where we are as a community."

She emphasized the common thread of values that unites Europeans. These values have come under attack from some of the main competitors in world trade and from international terrorism. But Europe should not give in to the temptation of compromising values for the sake of security.

According to Huebner one of the most important values is solidarity. This had never been restricted to the EU members. The Union had been by far the largest provider of foreign assistance funds to the developing world with a concentration on the poorest countries, particularly in Africa.

Tove Vidabeck, the representative of the EEA at the EU, welcomed Huebner's speech. "As Dr Huebner spoke about the kind of Europe we aspire to, in which the economy, social welfare and environment are all deeply important she is talking about Christian values," said the Danish EEA-representative.

EEA's General Director Gordon Showell-Rogers assured Huebner that evangelicals are "passionate about our civic responsibilities." Huebner's contribution to the General Assembly was an encouragement especially to Poland's small evangelical community.

The EEA represents approximately ten million evangelicals in 35 member alliances. 150 representatives from 38 countries take part in the Assembly. It is also the annual meeting of the European Evangelical Missionary Alliance and EEA's Youth Forum.

Low-caste Indian Hindus stage mass conversions

Anto Akkara

Nagpur, India (ENI) – Christians and other faith groups have challenged anti-conversion laws enacted by some Indian states by publicly burning copies of the controversial legislation and carrying out mass conversions of Hindus.

Thousands of people gathered at a rally for religious freedom in Nagpur in central India on October 14 to witness the mass conversions of low-caste Hindu Dalits to Christianity and Buddhism.

Many of the converts came from the states of Gujarat and Chhattisgarh where anti-conversion laws are in force. By converting, they hope to escape the prejudice and discrimination they often face as Dalits.

"Religious freedom is the key to dalit dignity. That is why we decided to hold a rally like this," Udit Raj, a Dalit leader who converted from Hinduism to Buddhism in 2001, told Ecumenical News International.

The day marked the 50th anniversary of the adoption of Buddhism by the scholar Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar who urged low-caste Indians to escape the Hindu caste system by converting.

"This is an occasion to celebrate religious freedom after the example shown by Dr Ambedkar 50 years ago," said Joseph D'Souza, president of the All India Christian Council which organized the Christian protest with other groups.

The burning of a copy of the state of Gujarat's anti-conversion law was loudly applauded by the 10,000 strong-crowd. Christian hymns were sung as an evangelical bishop and four pastors performed baptisms for about 50 Hindus converting to Christianity in a water tank there.

Although discrimination on the basis of caste is against the Indian constitution and prohibited by many laws, its practice is still widespread, especially in rural India say Dalits, who were once called "untouchables".

Delegates and observers from Britain, Canada and the United States attended the Nagpur rally.

"Religious freedom is the core to the emancipation of the dalits and no external force should interfere in the freedom to choose his faith," said Nanci Ricks, executive director of the US-based Dalit Freedom Network.

Priests, lawyers want Indonesia at international court over executions

Michele Green

Singapore (ENI) – Lawyers and Roman Catholic priests say they are seeking to take Indonesia to the International Criminal Court for the execution of three Christians last month for their part in a mob killing.

The inter-denominational Indonesian group, Advocacy Service for Justice and Peace in Indonesia (PADMA), said the executions were illegal and unconstitutional. This is because the accused were denied their constitutional rights to make a second appeal for clemency under Indonesian law, were executed in an "inhuman and uncivilized way" and were not buried according to their religious beliefs and wishes.

"We are preparing legal efforts via competent international institutions such as the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the International Criminal Court," the Rev. Nobert Bethan, a priest behind the initiative, had said at a news conference in Jakarta after the executions of the three Catholics. PADMA lawyers and advocates represented the men while they were in jail.

The lawyers are also protesting the government's refusal to transfer the bodies of the three men to a local church where they had asked for a Catholic funeral. Instead one of the men was buried without Catholic rites and the bodies of the other two were buried at a remote village.

The three were convicted of leading mobs behind the killings of 200 Muslims in ethnic fighting on the island of Sulawesi in 2000. Two thousand people were killed in three years of communal fighting on the island. Human rights activists noted that no Muslims were executed for the killings of Christians although several were sentenced to lengthy jail terms.

Activists have accused Indonesia of going ahead with the executions of the three Catholics to allay criticism from Muslims over the planned execution of three Islamic militants convicted of bombing a night-club on the island of Bali in 2002 in which 200 people were killed.

The three Christians, Fabianus Tibo, Dominggus Da Silva and Marinus Riwu were executed

Christian pastor shot dead in Indonesia

Michele Green

Singapore (ENI) – An unidentified assailant has shot dead a Christian pastor on an island in Indonesia where Muslim-Christian tension is high following the execution of three Roman Catholics last month.

The gunman shot the Rev. Irianto Kongkoli in the head on October 16 while the cleric was shopping with his wife in Palu, the provincial capital of Central Sulawesi, a local police chief said. After the shooting the gunman fled on a waiting motorcycle along with an accomplice.

"He [Kongkoli] suddenly fell to the ground after a gunshot was heard," the state-run Antara news agency quoted a witness to the killing as saying.

Indonesian officials said Kongkoli had been active in protests against Indonesia's execution of three Catholics last month after they were convicted of leading a Christian mob involved in the killings of around 200 Muslims in 2000.

Relations between Muslims and Christians – who make up about 8 per cent of Indonesia's 245 million population – have been volatile since the executions.

About 17 per cent of the population of the Sulawesi Island are Protestant and two per cent are Catholic. The island is one of the few heavily populated Christian areas in the former Dutch colony of Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim country.

Indonesia's leading umbrella group for Protestants, the Communion of Churches in Indonesia called for an investigation into the killing of Kongkoli. It said: "Such incidents indicate the government is not yet able to protect citizens."

Chinese pastor sentenced for producing Christian literature

Dan Wooding

CHINA (ANS) – As Chinese officials have been hosting Dr. Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury, spiritual head of the world's 77 million Anglicans, the seriousness of the restrictions on Christian activity in the country have been highlighted by the sentencing of a disabled pastor for printing Bibles and Christian literature.

According to a news release from Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), Pastor Wang Zaiqing, a well known house church pastor from Anhui province, has been sentenced to two years imprisonment and fined 100,000 Yuan ($12,500.00), for producing Bibles and Christian materials. In a now familiar tactic, Pastor Wang was charged with conducting "illegal business practices" even though he gave the literature away and made no profit.

"The verdict was announced on October 9, the same day the Archbishop, Dr. Rowan Williams, discussed the need for more pastors and theological training for the Church in China during his visit to Shanghai," said the CSW release.

"Pastor Wang's case is the third such prosecution for illegal business practices for production of Christian literature in the last year. It highlights the Chinese authorities' tactic of criminalizing religious activities in order to disguise religious persecution under the cloak of the law.

"The most prominent of these cases has been that of well known Beijing house church leader Pastor Cai who was sentenced to three years in prison for illegal business practices November 8, 2005 for producing Bibles and Christian literature. Pastor Cai was defended by Mr. Gao Zhisheng, the prominent lawyer who has been targeted for his fearless defense of religious freedom and human rights.

"Gao has been charged with 'inciting subversion of state power'. His lawyer received the notification of the decision to charge him during the Archbishop's visit, on October 12. The charge followed weeks of silence after Gao's removal by a dozen security officers on 15 August, prompting strong international criticism."

The Archbishop of Canterbury speaking in China

In releasing the news of the sentence of Wang Zaiqing, Rev. Bob Fu of China Aid Association said: "It is totally unacceptable for the Chinese authorities to arrest this pious pastor simply for printing Bibles. We appeal to the Archbishop of Canterbury, who will hold a press conference in Beijing Monday, October 23, at the conclusion of his visit to China, to voice his concerns on the situation of religious freedom in China".

Tina Lambert, Deputy National Director of Christian Solidarity Worldwide says: "It is sadly ironic that at the time Chinese officials are seeking to show progress in religious matters they are simultaneously sentencing a pastor for producing Christian literature. China claims to be afraid of cults, yet it suppresses production of Christian materials, forces groups to operate secretly and prevents them from running seminaries. Such policies simply create a breeding ground for heresies and unorthodox practice.

"It would make much better sense to allow all groups to operate freely in public without the current restrictions which breach international standards. For a long time now the unregistered church of China has been calling for the government to acknowledge and establish dialogue with its leaders. We hope that China will recognize that now is the time to take this step forward to provide concrete proof of its claims of progress in religious matters."

The Archbishop of Canterbury's two-week visit was aimed at boosting understanding between China's state-sanctioned Protestant church and the world's Anglicans, but China watchers believe that this latest news will no nothing to improve those relations.

Dan Wooding is an award winning British journalist now living in Southern California with his wife Norma. He is the founder and international director of Assist News Service.

Muslim apartheid: behind the veil

Peter C Glover

The issue of Muslim women wearing veils in public that has ignited an unprecedented national debate in the UK and that has already led to bans in a number of European countries, is destined to become an issue in Canada, too. Partially because the debate runs deeper than one of culture only, but touches on issues of security, identity and multiculturalism generally. Even so, when leader Premier Dalton McGuinty and opposition leader John Tory commented to the *Toronto Sun* on the subject recently both appeared to deny the importance of the issue and passed it off as a purely private matter. McGuinty told the TS, "One of the strengths of this society that we're building together is that we respect one another's traditions and faiths, as long as we understand that we're building here on common ground and respecting the law of the land." John Tory said, "I think that what we should be doing here is spending our time trying to find ways to bring people together and to understand each other better, rather than giving them instructions on how they can dress or how they can live their lives".

Sadly, both responses reflect a somewhat naïve attitude to what has become in many European countries a deeply separatist issue on the part of Muslims that actually denies the reality of the social "togetherness" and integration both leaders are speaking about. Nor does it appear they have even thought through the serious identity and security issues the non-integrating issues of issues like the veil imply.

Sadly both responses reflect a somewhat naive attitude to what has become in many European countries a highly charged issue concerning Muslim separation. The veil symbolizes Muslim rejection of social integration and togetherness. The remarks by McGuinty and Tory suggest that they have not thought through the serious identity and security issues implied in the debate about the veil.

Jack Straw stated his belief that full-face veils were "a visible statement of separation" and both Tony Blair and Chancellor Gordon Brown backed his raising of the issue. The Islamic Human Rights Commission has, though, accused Mr Straw of "selectively discriminating."

The ensuing national debate has been fed by a clutch of very pragmatic test situations. They include that of a 24-year old Muslim teaching assistant who is taking legal action against her Church of England school in West Yorkshire for suspending her after she refused to remove her veil when teaching the children. Leaving aside the absurdity of how a Muslim came to be working at a Church of England school, she additionally refused to work with men. At an Islamic school in Leicester non-Muslim girls have been ordered to wear headscarves. Add to this the recent public anger expressed over a Muslim police officer excused from duties at the Israeli Embassy and the violent street protests in Windsor over plans to build a mosque in the area, and we get some idea of mounting public resentment against the cultural 'encroachment' of distinctly un-British or Western democratic values.

The reaction of Muslim leaders and Muslims on the streets of Jack Straw's constituency at Blackburn has been the highly predictable one whenever Western and Muslim values clash: that of claiming they are "offended" and being "victimized" by Straw's remarks. Dr Reefat Drabu of the Muslim Council of Britain said, "We seem to be all the time defending ourselves and we haven't got the opportunity to evolve within the culture we're in."

This in fact has been the standard Muslim line over cultural issues for some time and mostly, British values have given way allowing Muslims to receive special status treatment. But the remorseless erosion of the values of British society appears finally to have set off a backlash focused on the debate over the veil. But the subtext to even that debate is the whole thorny issue of multiculturalism generally. Some have referred to multiculturalism – the concept that there is no national prevailing culture and thus 'values' – as a social 'ticking time-bomb'. It seems that strong national support for Mr Straw's remarks now suggests that many Britons, including many British Muslims, have had enough of the erosion of British public values and the constant calls for special treatment. At a recent press briefing Tony Blair even indicated that his government has now all but abandoned the former policy of multiculturalism altogether.

Harriet Harman, who is standing for Labour's deputy leadership, said: "If you want equality you have to be in society not hidden away from it. The veil is an obstacle to women's participation on equal terms." What would NDP MPP's Cheri DiNovo make of that? She told the TS, "If they choose to wear a veil then so be it – this is a woman's right". If Cheri DiNovo is right then by what overruling right will she be able to challenge a prospective terrorist to take it off?

UK race relations minister Phil Woolas was bullish concerning the suspended teaching assistant, "She should be sacked. She has put herself in a position where she can't do her job." Such a strong reaction from Labour government ministers, who have in the past been apt to take the line of appeasement and capitulation to religious/cultural Muslim demands, reflects a change in the national mood.

UK Conservative deputy leader, David Davis, has also gone on record in a *Sunday Telegraph* editorial warning that Muslims themselves were "creating apartheid by shutting themselves off". Davis' line echoed strongly the observation recently made by Australian PM, John Howard. After suggesting that Muslim immigrants, like any other, should make the effort to "fit in" to Australian society, Howard was roundly condemned by Muslim leaders who warned of "blood on the streets" at the remarks. In Britain, a recent ICM poll showed that 57 per cent of voters also want Muslims to do more to "fit in", and 53 percent agree with Mr Straw that full veils create a barrier between Muslims and everyone else.

David Davis observed more generally: "There is a growing feeling that the Muslim community is excessively sensitive to criticism and unwilling to engage in substantive debate." He added, "Much worse is the feeling of some Muslim leaders that as a community they should be protected from criticism, argument, parody, satire and all other challenges in a society that has free speech as its highest value." Davis added, "It is straightforward: I respect your religion, you respect mine and we all respect our laws. No special treatment." Mr Davis believes "the very unity of our nation" is at stake. And therein lies the rub on all such cross-cultural issues as the veil for all Western nations.

In Britain's case, Government minister, Dennis MacShane, was blunt, citing the current debate as "a fightback...to reclaim Britain from the grip of those who refuse to acknowledge the centrality of British values of tolerance, fair play and parliamentary democratic freedoms." Constant Muslim claims to having been "offended" by this or that in British culture and the demand to be exempt from cultural norms is a clear message that far from "evolving in the culture we're in", as Dr Drabu claims, some Muslims are working for a cultural apartheid.

The reality is that though Islam is a religion, Islamism is a socio-political movement. Thus, what is often formulated as 'religious rights' issues, turn out to be dubious theology (nowhere is the veil taught as obligatory in the Koran) and blatantly subverting of national traditions and values, leading, ultimately, to a 'state within a state' situation. In such circumstances integration not only becomes a non-starter, but the very fabric of Western democratic cohesive society becomes threatened. These are the questions then that all Western nations, including Canada, with burgeoning Muslim populations are going to have to wrestle with.

In the UK, even Trevor Philips, head of the Commission for Racial Equality, has moved to back Mr Straw's remarks, expressing the view that the veil is "not a matter of public policy, it's a question of social etiquette and manners." And David Davis appears to agree, indicating that he would not however back a vote that formally banned veils. But, in the post-9/11 world of global Islamic extremism where the issue of identity and body searches are hot security considerations, I think they may well yet be forced to reconsider the banning of veils issue, given that many European countries have already done so.

France banned headscarves at its state schools in 2004. It also banned all "conspicuous" symbols, including the crucifix. Given the enshrined separation of state and religion the measure had overwhelming public support. The law on religious symbols and scarves does not apply to Muslim schools and universities, however. In July 2005 the Italian parliament approved anti-terrorist laws that made it an offence to hide one's features from the public, including the wearing of the burqa.

Though the German Federal Constitutional Court ruled in favor of a teacher wanting to wear a headscarf to school it allowed four local states to legislate as they saw fit. Four German states subsequently banned teachers for wearing headscarves and in the state of Hesse the ban applies to all civil servants. In Belgium, the city of Maaseik, on the Dutch border, has banned the niqab, which covers the whole body except for the eyes. Even in the strongly Muslim 'secular' state of Turkey headscarves are banned in civic places – state or private – and official buildings.

Messrs McGuinty, Tory and DiNovo might be appalled at such a thought but when exceptionally pro-Muslim societies like France have taken such measures to prevent cultural apartheid creep by stealth, there may need to be a realistic understanding that failing to do so almost inevitably leads to what David Davis described as "a series of closed societies within our open society." The ludicrous corollary of which could easily mean that if Osama Bin Laden himself were to 'veil up' he could pass from one end of Ottawa to the other escaping detection, effectively unidentifiable and unchallengeable under present rules.

Though the issue of the veil is an iconic one it is clearly representative of a much more important issue: that of ultimate authority and who wields power. Do national Western civilization values, rooted as they are in the Judeo-Christian tradition that bequeathed them, really count? Or should the religio-politico cultural and values of a global ideology that, if the British

Muslim apartheid ... *continued from p. 10*

and European experience reveals anything, strongly resists social integration and promotes cultural apartheid, take precedence? The malaise for Canada, like all Western nations, is that there doesn't appear in reality to be a middle ground because Muslims do not allow for one. The values of one or the other must ultimately, it seems, prevail.

For Christians however, the underlying issue is also one of the 'values' of an ideology and religion not rooted in Judeo-Christian teaching and morality and the God of the Bible. Christians, and no doubt Jews, ought therefore to more fully understand the struggle for civilization that is going on here. What perhaps is heartening, in the light of the current debate on veils for the first time however, is that the implications and ramifications of subverting Western values (really Judeo-Christian moral values) has begun to come home to more and more populations. But we have yet to see whether Canada can awake to its plight – and the imperative need of the hour: to oppose one ideology (or pattern of beliefs) with another.

Peter C Glover is a writer on political, cultural and faith matters and more of his writing can be found at www.petercglover.com .

Iraq *...continued from page 1*

invasion of Iraq, most have admitted that in the light of the present mess it was a bad idea. Others say the initial idea of removing a murderous dictator wasn't a bad idea, but how the "nation-building" enterprise was carried out subsequently was botched. Few, however, agree with Bennis that the answer is to pull out as quickly as possible. It can get worse, they argue, and it will if U.S. troops are not there to rein in death squads to prevent them from annihilating entire neighborhoods.

The fear is palpable. The U.N. estimates that some 3 million Iraqis have been displaced, about half of them fleeing the violence to other places in Iraq and half to neighboring countries like Syria and Jordan. An estimated 800,000 Iraqis are living in Syria and more are arriving every month. Some 35,000 Christians have fled to Syria after receiving death threats from Islamist radicals. Laurens of the UN Refugee Committee warned that Syria cannot provide for all these refugees and if the UN does not provide more help soon, many of them will find their way to countries in Europe.

A long story in *Time Magazine* lays out five essential things that need to be done to rescue Iraq from its present quagmire. It needs 1) to clean out the rogues from the police and the military, 2) to deal with al-Sadr's militia, 3) bring the Sunnis back into the political process, 4) involve Iraq's neighbors (Iran and Syria) in formulating a solution, and 5) get tougher. All, as the article admits, easier said than done. In fact, even as they meet to work out a new strategy, the military leaders say that every conceivable strategy has already been tried. There are really no new options, and even if all five steps listed by *Time* could be accomplished, there is no guarantee that they would achieve a lasting peace or establish the conditions for a stable government, to say nothing of a democracy.

Peter Galbraith, a former State Department official, seems to be getting more of a hearing in recent weeks. He argues for a division of Iraq into relatively autonomous sectors, with a weak central government. Kurdistan in the north is already largely functioning independently, while the south is controlled by various Shiite militias.

There is no reason, says Galbraith, for the U.S. to expend lives to try to keep the country together. While such an arrangement will not bring an end to the bloodshed immediately, he concedes, the U.S. can do little now to stem the civil war already underway. It simply recognizes what has already been happening. Mixed cities like Baghdad, however, will continue to spawn violence no matter what the U.S. does.

All the gods and ideologies of our present age seem to have been loosed in Iraq and they are determined to create havoc. The name of one of the gods undoubtedly is Democracy; it is not a god that showers unmixed blessings.

What's behind the veil?

Harry der Nederlanden

The debate about the veil worn by Muslim women seems a big flap over a trivial thing. And it would certainly not have become an issue were it not for the violent acts of a tiny revolutionary segment of that community. It is, however, a dramatic sign of Muslim difference – a sign that this community rejects the dominant values of "our"– that is, of Western – society.

Distinctive kinds of clothing serve many different purposes in our society. They serve to set off the person who wears them from the rest, be it in the form of a uniform, a symbol, a style or ethnic dress. Some forms of distinctive dress we hardly even notice anymore. Although we still speak of white collar workers or even of a suit-and-tie job, we don't react to these the way we do to the Muslim scarf (hijab) or veil (niqab). Yet, both set the wearer off as different in some respect.

Policemen, doctors, nurses, mail carriers and other occupations also wear unique forms of dress to draw attention to their authority and competence as well as to their occupation.

The nun's habit, the priest's or pastor's cassock or clerical collar also set the wearer off in terms of occupation. But they do more than that: they also identify the person with a religion and with a certain disciplined way of life.

None of these, however, separate the person from the society in which he or she lives. Rather, they signal his or her place and task within that society. Uniformed people generally perform a special service to society, and it is to our benefit for them to be readily identifiable.

When Western society was almost completely Christian, of course, the"religious orders" or clergy, were more integral to society than in today's secular society, but they still signalled that the person wearing the religious garb was standing outside of or over against the rest of the "secular" world.

We can also identify the Amish by their clothes. These not only symbolize a distinct and separate way of life, they are an expression of it. They are both a sign and a product of simplicity – Christian simplicity. Even Christians who do not embrace that way of life recognize that it is rooted in Paul's admonition to believers to dress modestly and to avoid pride.

I haven't said anything which you don't already know, but in all the essays and columns that I've read debating the Muslim veil this larger context is never mentioned. All around us every day we see people who are separated from the mass by the kind of clothes they wear. Clothing has always served to symbolize difference, whether of class, status, authority, gender, origin or occupation. They spell out information about the structure of our society.

Even certain styles become identified with some group, such as the hippy dress of the 60's and 70's or the gothic style of more recent times. These deliberately repudiate "proper" middle class standards. But other forms of dress may not be a deliberate choice by the wearer to set himself off from the rest of society. It's often easy to tell a bum by his dress, but he probably didn't deliberately choose to dress like a bum. The same is probably true of the stereotypical "geek" or "absent-minded professor".

When you walk around in Toronto, you will be able to identify immigrants from almost every part of the world, as many continue to wear the clothes they brought with them when they came here. Even those who aren't particularly attached to their ethnic form of dress aren't going to burn their clothes and buy North American duds. But some are deeply committed to a certain way of dress because it not only has ethic but also religious significance.

That is true of the Muslim veil – but also of orthodox Jewish modes of dress and of the Sikh turban and kirpan.

Each of these have caused friction in our society. They obviously symbolize a certain distinctiveness, a rejection of the dominant culture, a degree of separation and resistance. Muslim modes of dress and symbols of separateness have become deeply charged, of course. But they were not a topic of media attention before the rise of a violent faction – a heresy – within Islam. Some of us, I daresay, were more inclined to admire and respect the modesty of Muslim women, just as we admire the simplicity of the Amish, even if we don't imitate it.

Since 9-11 and other attacks, we no longer look at the Muslim world and Muslim communities in our midst in the same way. They represent a threat to "our" way of life because somehow or other they are associated with the terrorist element. We feel that if they would only become more like us, dress like us and value the same things we do, the threat would go away.

Yet, Muslim wives and daughters wore headscarves and veils in their own countries too. So they wore those symbolic clothes not to repudiate Western ways but positively to reflect their beliefs. May we object to the beliefs these represent? Of course. The feminists are undoubtedly right in saying that they represent a view of the place of women which most of us do not share. And they are an impediment to the kind of social interaction most of the rest of us value.

But we must remind ourselves that as Calvinist Christians, we too have built on a rhetoric of distinctiveness and separation. The dominant Western lifestyle and ethos is really not "ours". Christian schools, churches and other organizations also represent a rejection of the dominant culture. The nuns and their habits, too, represent a dissident view of the role of women. Such differences create disagreements and tensions, but if we commit our society to a policy of "integration," we will be hastening what we wish to avoid: we will be branding all Muslims who seek to be faithful to their own traditions as outsiders. And we will treat them as such.

Like the Muslim community, we too are fundamentally opposed to the spirit of secularism that has swept the West. We may (alas?) no longer choose to show our opposition in our dress, but we too are called to be counter-cultural. We are so in a different way than Muslims. But if we deprive Muslims of their unique ways of expressing their faith, how can we demand that our secularist judges and lawyers recognize our right to express ours?

The difference we assert is not, or ought not to be, a matter first of all of separating ourselves off from the rest for security or to signal superiority. It is first of all an expression of love, of a desire to reconnect not just ourselves but all humanity with the Source of knowledge, compassion, freedom and peace. Although there are good reasons to be uneasy about Muslim rejection of Western values, much of the antipathy has deeply secularist roots – and it is often directed toward Christian differences as well.

Convocation

Until wisdom and compassion embrace

I had the privilege of attending the ICS convocation at which Gerald Vandezande was presented with an honorary Doctor of Letters degree for his lifetime of indefatigable service and at which ICS's newest president, Dr. John Suk, gave his first convocation address.

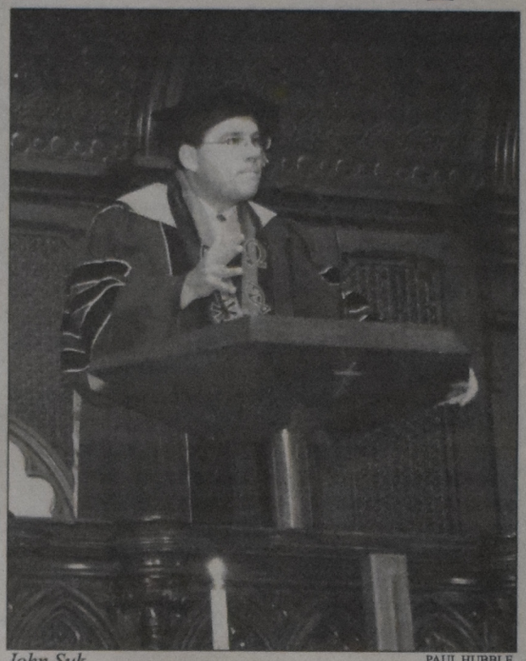
It was one of those evenings that enrich us by reminding us of deep biblical roots. I wish everyone could have been there; and I print Suk's speech here so our readers can participate a little after the fact.

Pass the speech on to a teacher or pastor who doesn't subscribe to CC. It's good, solid stuff.

HdN

John Suk

Scripture reading: Mark 6:30-44
When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things. (vs 34)



John Suk PAUL HUBBLE

I'd like to tell you a story about wisdom embracing compassion. It is Gillian's story.

Gillian entered my family's life in January 2000. Our son William was in Ecuador as a Rotary Club exchange student, and so my wife Irene and I decided to welcome a foreign student into our home as well. As a member of the Shona tribe in Zimbabwe, Gillian certainly qualified.

We immediately fell in love with Gillian. She was fun, insatiability curious, and unfailingly polite. When she arrived, Gillian didn't know how to turn on a shower, had never seen snow, put on a seatbelt, realize that you had to sleep between sheets, or ever used a computer. She didn't know what to make of shopping trips that didn't end up at a used clothes store. And, we discovered, she hardly knew anything about AIDS.

Gillian did know about pneumonia. And how people she loved, died of it. Gillian knew all about infections, and how people she loved died of them. Gillian knew about mysterious diseases doctors couldn't do anything about, and how people she loved died of those diseases. But in Zimbabwe, no one had ever helped Gillian connect any of this to AIDS.

After a year of American high school, however, Gillian put the pieces together. Back in Zimbabwe, she volunteered to work in hospices, did public relations work with her Rotary Club to raise AIDS awareness, and tried to explain to her family and friends how pneumonia and sores and so on were really more than they seemed.

The year Gillian returned to Zimbabwe, that country's dictator, Robert Mugabe also shut down all the universities. With the help of Rotary Club members, Irene and I managed to get Gillian back to Grand Rapids a few days before 9/11, where she enrolled in a community college.

I'll never forget what Gillian said that first semester. She said, "John, I am going to help find a cure for AIDS before all my family and friends die." Full of compassion for her family, friends, and country, she decided in her wisdom that what she needed was an education. That was five years ago. This fall, Gillian enrolled at the University of Syracuse where she has a full-ride scholarship to do a PhD in Drug Development, and a hefty stipend to pay her living expenses.

We don't often connect compassion with wisdom or knowledge. Compassion seems to fit better with making a donation or fussing over a child who has scraped her knee. Gillian's story, however, illustrates that for the healing of the nations wisdom and compassion must embrace.

As they embrace in Jesus in our scripture reading. Mark writes that Jesus and his disciples went looking for a quiet place to relax. A sea of human misery has left them exhausted. So they get in a boat and tried to escape. The crowds won't let them go, however, and followed. Full of compassion, Jesus decides that rather than escape, he will land to minister to them again.

And then what? Does Jesus heal the crowds? No. Not this time, at least.

Does Jesus feed the crowds? No – at least, not right away.

Mark actually says that, seeing "a large crowd he had compassion on them . . . so he began teaching them many things," – a long class, I suppose, on faith, hope and love in the reign of God.

The Greek word for compassion here is splagxnisthey. It is an onomatopoeic word that sounds like what it means. Splagxisnisthey is to get your tongue as twisted and knotted as your intestines feel when you're really worried, when you're really hurting for someone else. The Greeks actually thought compassion came from the intestines, because compassion feels like being all tied up in knots inside. Compassion is a sick feeling inside for someone else; it is love that shoulders another person's hurt.

So picture Jesus for a minute. He's standing on a hill. People stretch out as far as he can be heard. "Like sheep without a shepherd," says Mark. "Harassed and helpless," says Matthew. Average folks, but the hope has been all but squeezed out of them. Soldiers occupy their country. The trauma of public crucifixions lies heavy on them. Tax collectors, money changers and corrupt officials rob them. And their religious leaders, the Pharisees, fool them about what's important. Jesus says of them, "Woe to you experts in the law, because you have taken away the key to knowledge" (Luke 11:52).

This crowd is looking up to Jesus, eager to enter, listening hard for that missing key. It is almost more than Jesus can stand. It ties him up in knots, deep inside. So Jesus clutches his hands around his stomach, because it hurts. Jesus has splagxnisthey.

And so he teaches them. "Many things," says Mark. In this text, wisdom and compassion for the ages, embrace.

At first, we are surprised. Not by the compassion, because we expect compassion of Jesus. He died on the cross on account of his love for us, after all. But we are surprised by the emphasis, here, on teaching – and thus, on Jesus' wisdom. We are so used to surveying the wondrous cross that we think Jesus' whole life was nothing but a race to Golgotha.

But according to the gospels, Jesus spent years teaching his disciples, and the crowds, before his last trip to Jerusalem. He came, says the apostle John to dwell among us, full of grace and truth. Jesus came to teach parables, preach sermons, reveal the mysteries of the kingdom and make God known to us.

Full of compassion

Jesus gave us the key to knowledge. He taught that the first shall be last, that the poor are rich, that the other cheek must be turned, that we should not judge, but seek the kingdom, instead. He taught that those who mourn would, one day, laugh, that the father always waits patiently, and that the kingdom within us is also like a mustard seed.

Like Jesus, Paul and Mark and John are teachers, too. At Mars Hill, in Athens, Paul shapes an appeal to the Stoics and Epicureans using the canons of Greek rhetoric to guide him, but without submitting to the narrow logic of Aristotelian syllogisms. And Paul quotes obscure Greek poets like Epimendides and Aratus to make his case for the resurrection.

The apostle John adopts the language of neo-Platonism to make the case for Jesus as the logos – the uncreated one who was with God and was God in the beginning. Early church scholars used Greek philosophical conceptions to explain how Jesus could be one person in trinity and two natures in one person. Mark makes use of Hellenistic literary forms to invent a new one, the gospel, arguably more enduring than any other genre the world has ever seen.

You see, in God, wisdom and compassion embrace. In his race to embrace the children of Adam and Eve, and save them from folly, God has always rejected anti-intellectualism, as these few verses illustrate.

"Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place" (Psalms 51:6).

"Hold on to instruction, do not let it go; guard it well, for it is your life" (Proverbs 4:13).

"But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13).

"Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" (Romans 11:33).

In the reign of God – responsive as it is to the tragedy of sin, and on a trajectory towards shalom – God's compassion and wisdom embrace for our redemption. And at ICS we seek ourselves, our students, and our community from within that embrace. Why both, together?

Because, without wisdom, compassion is naïve and ineffective, a bystander to injustice. Without wisdom, compassion agonizes over symptoms but remains ignorant of deeper structural issues. Without wisdom, little changes, and compassion is just a feeling always on the brink of giving way to despair.

On the other hand, without compassion, wisdom always threatens to become little more than know-how, which can be used as easily to justify more efficient weapons of mass destruction as it is to feed and clothe the poor. Without compassion, wisdom devolves into pragmatism for my ends, rather than relief for the oppressed.

But when compassion and wisdom embrace young people make a life of defeating AIDS. Bodies politic look out for every neighbor's welfare rather than just the national interest. When compassion and knowledge embrace, people like Gerald Vandezande become adept at engaging the levers of government and industry so that single mothers and refugees and First Nations and religious minorities and many more on the margins of our society can find justice and peace.

And again, at ICS, we are committed to making sure that especially the wisdom part of this equation isn't lost; that the truth of the good news becomes the grammar for our own Christ-like compassion. We live our commitment out by offering a course

Convocation

John Suk, Gerald Vandezande, and Barbara Carvill PAUL HUBBLE

of study in interdisciplinary philosophy that leads to a Master of Worldview Studies, an MA, or a Ph.D. degree. We want our graduates to teach in classrooms and work for public and private institutions where they can model – as Gillian did for me – the fundamental importance of compassion and wisdom embracing. Or to put it another way, we offer advanced academic degrees because, as the ICS mission statement has it, "our calling is to witness to Christ in the academic arena by letting the Gospel's message of healing, renewal and restoration shape our pursuit of knowledge and wisdom."

At the ICS, we try to do scholarship in the light cast by Jesus; scholarship that is good news to the poor; scholarship that proclaims release from captivity, and recovery of sight to the blind; scholarship that puts a premium on freeing the oppressed, whether they are oppressed by structures or idolatries or just plain dumb ideas; scholarship that imagines how things might be in the year of the Lord's favor and tries to prepare people to live as citizens of that day now. My dream? My dream is for the ICS to graduate enough scholars with this vision of wisdom and compassion embracing – enough scholars to put one in every Canadian public and private university, and at least one in every American State, by 2025.

Of course, as much as our society depends on wisdom, popular culture does little more than pay lip service to its pursuit of wisdom. We're too taken by our entertainments and too busy commuting or raising families and too distracted by the modern media to read much. Wisdom may be praised in Proverbs, but it doesn't have half the attraction of celebrities waving to us from red carpets.

The media arrest us with snapshots of raped women in Darfur or reports of 600,000 dead civilians in three years of Iraqi war and sectarian strife, but compassion – as measured by a real commitment to bring an end to genocides or saving the planet's environment – is pretty hard to come by.

This means that when, we at the ICS strive to embrace the wisdom and compassion Christ displayed on the shores of Galilee, we are actually engaged in a counter "popular" cultural task. And frankly, when I'm out on the road, trying to explain to people why the ICS deserves their prayers and support, I sometimes find it tough sledding. No one I visit will deny the importance of wisdom or compassion; they are just not very high on most people's day-to-day agendas. I have, however, hit on an analogy for our small graduate school that gets our importance across to at least some people. It goes like this. The ICS is a humble piece of Kingdom infrastructure.

Now, I know that infrastructure isn't too exciting. We don't dig up sewer pipes to have a good look at them because we find them fascinating; and we don't generally put the furnace in the living room because we think the sheet metal and wiring are attractive. When it comes to infrastructure, we tend to drive over it, hide it in the basement, and generally put off maintaining it or showing any interest in it.

But, of course, we ignore infrastructure to our peril. Walk into your home in the middle of February, after a vacation down South, when the temperature outside is ten below zero, and you will want your furnace to be working. If, however, you ignored your home's infrastructure when you had the chance, say back in the fall, you might well walk into a house where the furnace has failed, pipes are frozen, and sewer lines burst. Infrastructure – as the bridge tragedy in Laval, earlier this month illustrates – demands keen attention. And if we don't give it, problems, perhaps even tragedies, follow.

Well, the ICS is like the furnace – we're a small but important part of our society's infrastructure. What we do doesn't generally win any points with the people who live for a weekend of extreme skydiving or ice climbing. What we do won't make couch potatoes rise and do a little jig. But if we are to understand our society's fascination with extreme experiences; if we are to be discerning consumers of internet and television fare; and if someone is going to be writing CRTC policy that is worth doing a jig for; if ideals and sacrifice, faith and love, curiosity and understanding are to play a role in our society's classrooms and executive board rooms, then we need ICS and institutions like it to put wisdom into the service of compassion.

Through the graduate education we offer, through the writing our professors and students publish, ICS provides intellectual infrastructure for the school teacher who wants to understand how postmodernity has reshaped his or her students into people who feel things before they think them.

For the pastor who is convinced that scripture is more than a set of rules to crack the whip for, but rather, a joyous manifesto for ambassadors of reconciliation . . .

For the lobbyist who believes what the apostle Paul describes as principalities and powers, thrones and dominions have as much to do with good government as personal morality or polls . . .

For the professor trying to convince students that texts speak for authors while also revealing the deepest hopes and dreams – or perhaps even idolatries – of the reader . . .

For the business-person keen to put profit in the service of the common good . . .

For all such people, the Institute for Christian Studies is a university for bringing human curiosity and Biblical wisdom into a warm embrace with God's compassionate desire to make all things new.

The truth is, culture – the culture we usually enjoy without thinking too much about it, the culture we grouse about when it rubs us the wrong way, and the culture that has gone horribly off-track when it comes to many matters related to public justice and morality and economics – our culture is powerfully influenced, and even created, in university classrooms and seminars. Just because people don't stop to think about it, it is no less true that filmmakers and marketers and politicians and writers and executive directors usually pass through college and grad school classes. And in those classrooms, professors change minds and plant seeds, all of which, together, construct and reconstruct our world.

And at the ICS, we believe that Christians need to be part of that process, part of the never-ending conversation that takes place in our nation's university classrooms. We believe that even in academia, Christ's message of hope and redemption still deserve a hearing. We believe that our culture and our universities would benefit from a dialog with us as much as we need to be in conversation with them. We believe that even a secular culture can never truly understand itself or appreciate its accomplishments unless it thoughtfully engages with humble but learned advocates of that culture's own Christian roots and heritage at institutions like ICS.

And how does the ICS attempt this dialog? So far we have done this by offering full time education to highly qualified, motivated students. It has not been easy. The bills have all been paid by a pretty small, not especially well-to-do, highly dedicated community that just believes whatever one's faith is – whether in pragmatism or Jesus or Buddha – whatever one's faith is, it is utter folly to try to teach or learn as if that faith was not part of the equation. At the Institute for Christian Studies our compassion and wisdom – such as it is – embraces for the public good, even though the public purse strings have not been opened to us.

In spite of limited resources, over the past several years the ICS has been running near capacity. We are in a position where we can't take on more students unless we hire more professors. And we can't hire more professors unless we find new resources. As the president of ICS, I believe that the embrace of compassion and wisdom make the search for those resources worthwhile – even urgent.

[For reasons of space, some of Dr. Suk's remarks on how the ICS plans to fulfill its calling in the years ahead have been omitted.]

But finally, as matter of public justice, the ICS must also continue to seek equitable public support for its students. A pluralistic society like Canada needs to create an educational landscape where multiple perspectives are engaged in friendly discourse and civil debate. To the degree that institutions like the ICS are forced, by a lack of funding, to limit their presence on the academic scene, and limit their educational offerings, the discourse doesn't happen and our entire society is diminished.

ICS as an institution, and its students deserve public funding in the same measure, and for the same reasons, that students at public institutions receive. ICS students are not in it for themselves, after all. They want to learn because they are full of compassion for their neighbors, full of love for the countries of which they are citizens, and driven by ideals that need more exposure in our society. While our students' short-term goals may not be as dramatic as those of my foster-daughter Gillian's hope for a cure for AIDS, the hopes and dreams of ICS students run as deep and wide as Gillian's – healing for this nation and all nations, healing rooted in wisdom and motivated by Christ-like compassion. That sort of vision deserves public support.

In the mean time, we'll continue to offer our programs and degrees because we believe it's the right thing to do; even while we continue to work for equitable public funding because that is just.

So finally, this invitation. Students. Parents. Supporters. Government. My university colleagues from all over North America. Walk with us. Lend us your support. Encourage us on our way. Pray for us. And help us, please, to find a way for compassion and wisdom to embrace.

Ecclesiastes

Revolutionary madness

I have seen slaves on horseback,
while princes go on foot like slaves.
Ecclesiastes 10:7

A.A. van Ruler

One reason and part of the uncertainly and instability of life is that everything undergoes ceaseless change. It is true that this doesn't cause us moderns as much difficulty as the ancients. In any case, it is very modern to devote a great deal of attention to the rapid changes in our world and to value them positively. To be progressive is considered a good thing. To call someone conservative is to find fault. Yesterday's thing is worthless; today's is boring; only tomorrow's seems real.

This idea of endless flux and change and of the temporality of everything was not uplifting to the ancients, nor was time itself. Instead, it tore them apart inwardly. They sought what was enduring and constant, for this only had obvious worth to them. This was why they tended to dismiss time and chose eternity instead. In eternity, they believed, there was no change. Then everything is eternal; it is worth striving for.

Since change was considered painful, the ancients liked to represent it in its most extreme form. It was frequently represented as a total reversal. Everything was turned upside-down. Everything was set on its head. Slaves went on horseback while kings went on foot like slaves. From this perspective, the change that we see in temporal reality takes on the character of a revolution.

Albrecht Durer, Knight and servant.

This revolutionary sentiment has penetrated deep into the consciousness of modernity. It is almost unbelievable how much influence Karl Marx and other revolutionary minds of the 19th century exercised over the 20th, far beyond Communist and Marxist circles. We moderns are haunted by the feeling that the existing order, simply because it exists, must be replaced by something totally different, indeed, by its opposite.

The actual course of things, however, displays a hugely ironic turn. What was objectionable about the established order, for example, was that slaves always had to walk while kings traveled by horseback. The radical change ushered in by the revolution usually results in the same arrangement, only reversed: now the slave is on horseback and the king afoot.

All revolutions, in other words, exhibit a large dose of futility and failure. Consequently, most revolutionaries eventually give up on the revolution. A revolution only replaces one establishment with another. The ideal thing, it seems, would be for there to be no established order.

When you think that through, you penetrate to the other side of the revolutionary mind – an inner revolt against everything, a kind of nihilism that seeks to replace the "all" by "nothingness." In short, we reach a mysticism of stillness and rest. In Europe the revolutionary mind seemed to eventuate in Buddhism.

The Preacher, however, does not come to such a nihilistic view of the world. He has more of an eye for the relativity of reality. He focuses our attention on the madness to which a revolutionary reversal of the established order brings us. There are always some who go afoot and others who go on horseback. However, when kings go afoot and slaves on horseback this creates a dangerous as well as an absurd situation.

There are, after all, slaves and kings, or to put it in other words: there are wise men and fools, rulers and subjects, leaders and followers, trailblazers and trainbearers. The Lord God has created great masses of people. All of us are called into existence. He seems to have a special fondness for the average, for most of us have only average gifts. We are part of the great multitude of people. We are capable of playing a middle role in the whole of things.

But there are also those who excel: they have greater gifts – a more profound spirit, a richer mind, a stronger will. They become our leaders. They must take the most important positions. The best (*aristoi*) must take the power (*kratie*); they must govern. So an aristocratic form of government would seem to be the most desirable.

For the many to live together in a society a form of government is necessary. It provides structure. The whole is more, and different than the sum of its parts. There is authority. There are institutions. There is power.

But is it more pleasant to belong to those who rise above the rest and who arrive at a place of influence and authority? It may appear to be so. But perhaps we should take a deeper, a more spiritual look. It is also burdensome to be a ruler – more burdensome perhaps than being a slave. It involves a tremendous amount of responsibility. His deeds must display justice – justice for the whole and for every single individual. Ministers of the state, judges, magistrates and all those who hold positions of authority stand first under God's judgment.

This is another reason that the revolutionary mentality, in its grab for power, often exhibits a superficial, unspiritual side. To put the slave on horseback and the king afoot is all too easy.

However, it can destroy the whole fabric of society. The whole earth shakes when the existing order is overthrown. It may be necessary, but we must not think it to be a small thing. We must never think it to be a matter of course.

Above all, we must never absolutize revolutionary principles.

The mentality that seeks revolution for the sake of revolution is madness. It is contrary to creation, for creation displays structure and form. Nor does it correspond to sin, for sin involves problems that cannot be solved from the inside. Nor does it accord with the Kingdom of God, for the Kingdom is not a simply a boiling up of revolutionary dynamic; it is created reality in the state of divine glory.

So let's be careful and wise. If something needs to be changed, we must act carefully and wisely. It comes down to this: let us discover joy in what we have and where we are standing.

Light in the Darkness

Richard Oostra

The world we live in is trembling over the outbreak of terror and the calamities and threats that are facing the West from every direction.

Just a couple of years ago we had terrorists blowing up trains in Spain. Then many died in train explosions in India. In Pakistan a disastrous earthquake devastated entire towns, leaving thousands homeless or dead. Multitudes in the Far East are still suffering from the aftermath of the tsunami; Christians in Muslim countries are persecuted daily for their faith. Warlords in the Sudan and Darfur and many other countries have uprooted most villages that were predominantly Christian, drafting the men to fight, abused the women and caused millions to be displaced and living in camps.

The US is also targeted with disasters. First Florida was struck by hurricanes, then came Katrina and a large part of the country was and still is utterly destroyed. Massive fires have swept many other parts of this nation, and the wars we have become engaged in to uproot terrorism that caused the 9-11 disaster are not going well.

Now the world trembles as it watches a mad dictator in North Korea beginning to play with firing missiles and experimenting with nuclear bombs. Other oppressive regimes like Iran have joined in this race and the United Nations has become a useless and enemy infiltrated world governing body.

Israel, coming to it's own defense in Lebanon as well as in Gaza, is accused of being a murderous nation. Their only hope may be to bomb all Iranian nuclear sites, but for the sake of the flow of oil to the West, they are being restrained so that this will not happen.

As these frightening calamities break out all around us, wars, terrorism, natural disasters, and nuclear threats – there is yet another menacing threat facing us all. Scientists around the world are on pins and needles as they monitor the avian bird flu. They warn that if this deadly strain mutates to humans, it could cause a worldwide pandemic. It is estimated that this could easily wipe out one fifth of the world's population.

Many people believe that there are no solutions to what the world is facing today and that we are spinning into global turmoil.

But as Christians where do we stand? Do we ever hear any prophetic messages as to what time it is on God's timetable? Can we turn to the Bible and see what prophesies and warnings Jesus gave us are being fulfilled in our time? Or are we refusing to turn to Christ's teachings on these things for our hope, comfort and strength?

Even the prophet Isaiah speaks comfort to his people. He describes that in the midst of turmoil God sits enthroned in the heavens and from his perspective "all men are like grass." Empires have come and gone. Adolph Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Saddam Hussein, all these have had their day even in our times. Isaiah challenges us today when being troubled by world events to look up:

See the Sovereign LORD comes with power and his arm rules for him. See his reward is with him... He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.

Is. 40:10, 23; Rev. 22:12

So how are we to see the events in this world? Yes, they may fill us with a certain amount of fear but at the same time we must constantly remind ourselves while talking or thinking about these things that even Jesus had forewarned us:

"There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. At that time they will see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

Luke 21:25-28

Notice that Christ says, "When these things begin to happen…lift up your heads." This suggests things are going to get worse. Therefore now is the time to make sure that we have drawn near to the Lord. We're to anchor ourselves in his Word and being rooted in our relationship to Christ grow strong into unwavering saving faith.

In the midst of this worldwide "shaking of things" where is the Lord's eye focused on? The Bible tells us God's vision is trained on his children.

But the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love.

Psalm 33:18

Even in the midst of great world wars, God's primary focus isn't on the tyrants, but on those who love him. In regard to the "end times" Jesus continually warned: "Fear not I will be with you to the end." Many Christians today have developed an escape clause when talking about the end time and they call this "a pre-tribulation rapture." But neither the early church nor the Bible give us any ground for these speculative theories. The chapter following Jesus discourse on the end of this age (Matt. 24) is followed up with three end time parables (Matt. 25). The first deals with the bridesmaids and we could call this one "Readiness for Christ's return." When the groom's return was a bit later than they had expected they ran out of oil and could not endure to the end.

The second parable spells out that we are to give an account of how we have used the talents and opportunities God has given each of us. The last parable speaks of how Christ wants to reward all those who have faithfully lived for him. But Jesus clearly predicted first of all a global persecution on all believers.

You will be handed over and persecuted and put to death and you will be hated by all nations because of me. Matt 24:9

Earlier Jesus already predicted to his disciples that they as well would be persecuted and that all men would hate them because of him.

...but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

Matt 10:22

May God give us the faith and assurance that this world is under his control. That he cares for those who love him and that he will never allow them to suffer more than they are able to bear. At the same time we have a responsibility not to worry by the storms around us but be sure that our faith is upon the Rock and not in men.

My window seat

Mendelt Hoekstra

Forgiveness

When I was just old enough to be able to think on a deeper level, the church my family was attending went through a "church split". (I put church and split in quotation marks because no man, woman or child will be able to split the church in any way. The description, though often used, is a misnomer.)

That is to say, there was basically one group of the congregation that felt the church should go in this direction with many of the doctrines, traditions and leadership structure and there was another group that believed the church should go in a different direction.

I can still remember the tension felt during this time. I still remember the gossip that was spread. One Sunday morning a church elder got so upset in the fellowship hall that while this not-so-gentle man was talking, he spilled his coffee all over the floor. He ignored the potential stain and kept talking to make his point heard. I remember being scared during that situation. Throughout that period of "church splitting" I couldn't fully understand why people were thinking less of each other just because they believed differently.

I still can't understand it.

Last week I heard that a family in the church where I worship today has decided to leave for some of the same reasons. When I heard about this, I immediately phoned them to give them my best wishes. I spoke to the father and told him that I had always appreciated his sense of humor and his friendliness, and I asked him to pass on my well-wishes to his family. He told me that he was thankful to receive this phone call. I then said that it was my hope that this wasn't going to be the only phone call he received from members in our congregation and that he would receive hundreds of these calls. He didn't seem too optimistic.

I explained to him a little bit of what I experienced when my former church went through a "church split". I had seen relationships torn apart, spirits crushed, physical health deteriorate and even families choosing to no longer speak to each other over these issues. He said one thing that showed me that we are slowly learning how to be Christ-like in all situations. He told me that he has no "hard feelings" towards anyone from the church. When I heard that, my being resonated with an AMEN.

In both situations, this family leaving and the families that left many years ago, I am sure many people would want to reconsider their actions. I am sure there were things said that were either unkind or in an unkind manner. I am sure things were said and done that were regretted later. Thankfully, forgiveness clears those up.

This past summer I made a special effort to speak to a former classmate of mine who was constantly teased in grade eight. When I drove to her house, I was as nervous as could be. Asking for God's forgiveness for my sin can seem easy because we are assured of the answer. Asking a human for forgiveness is complicated because of the unknown. When I spoke to her, I explained how I still have guilt about how I treated her in grade eight. This was eighteen years ago – 18 years of time had passed.

When I spoke about those days, I could still see the hurt in her eyes. Kids can be cruel, and when children get teased at school they can leave scarred. After I asked for her forgiveness, two things stuck out. First, she told me how pleased she was that I came to talk to her and second, she forgave me without hesitation. All my guilt was erased in one intimidating yet cleansing 10-minute conversation.

Churches are not unlike relationships, and each church has defining moments when it must choose between being true to its mission and pleasing people. Obeying God must always trump trying to keep everybody happy. Churches cannot do God's work apart from becoming an intimate community and successfully working through conflict again and again. This is essential to community and relationship building. It looks like we are getting better at it.

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God speaks

Has any people heard the voice of God speaking . . . and survived? (Part 2)

Albert Mohler

In the book of Deuteronomy, we meet the speaking God. "Has any people heard the voice of God speaking from the midst of the fire, and survived?" Mercy and grace meet here. This is, in its own way, a proto-gospel. Christopher Wright makes this comment concerning what happened at Sinai, saying what really mattered there was not that there had been a theophonic manifestation of God, but that there had been a *verbal revelation* of God's mind and will. Sinai was a cosmic audiovisual experience, but it was the audio that mattered. It is the audio that matters, for God has spoken.

If God has spoken, then the highest human aspiration must be to hear what the Creator has said. Revelation is necessarily a personal matter. To hear the voice of the Lord God is not merely to receive information, but to meet the living God. Last issue, we considered five realities that should frame our thinking in light of the fact that God has spoken. Here are three more.

Sixth, because God has spoken, we must obey. This is not a word submitted for our consideration. The living God allows us to hear his voice from the fire and survive. He has demands to make of us, as Creator speaks to creature. And in the giving of the Torah, and the entire body of law, there is the requirement of obedience. This is repeated over and over again. It is stated in the form of a positive principle: Israel is told, "If you obey, you will be blessed and you will live. You will prosper in the land that I am giving you." The demand of obedience is also stated in the negative: "If you disobey, you will be cursed. You will bear my wrath. The nations of the world will cast you out. You will go out before them, to be taken as their exiles. You will be cast out of the land."

The demand of obedience is very clear, and it is central to Deuteronomy chapter four. Even as the Lord God through Moses is preparing his people to enter the promised land by reciting again the law, he says to them, "It is about obedience. I'm not giving you mere information. I'm not letting you hear my voice for your intellectual stimulation. It is not so that you will have an epistemological advantage over the pagan peoples around you! It is so that you would obey."

Seventh, if God has spoken, we must trust. "Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey." We know that song, or at least some previous generations knew that song. But it really is a matter of trust, a hermeneutic of trust, an epistemology of trust, a spirituality and theology of trust. If God has spoken, we trust his Word because we trust in him. Woe unto anyone who would sow seeds of mistrust or distrust of the Word of God. For to fail to trust this word is, as Israel was clearly told, to fail to trust in God himself. Paul Helm, one of the most faithful Christian philosophers of the day, points to trust as the new apologetic. He refers to an apologetic of trust, understanding that in the end, the character of God is what finally anchors not only our epistemology, but our redemption and our hope.

Eighth, if God has spoken, we must witness. Deuteronomy chapter four has a counterpart chapter in Deuteronomy 30. There, as Moses now prepares to die, the Lord speaks through him and says, "For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach. It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us and make us hear it that we may observe it?' Nor is it beyond the sea that you should say, 'Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it that we may observe it?' But the Word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it. See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity; in that I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in his ways and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that you may live and multiply, and that the Lord your God may bless you in the land which you are entering to possess it. But if your heart turns away and you will not obey, but are drawn away and worship other gods and serve them, I declare to you today that you shall surely perish. You will not prolong your days in the land where you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess it. I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life. Choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants by loving the Lord your God and obeying his voice, and by holding fast to him."

Joseph von Führich; Moses on Mount Horeb

Now consider Romans 10. The Apostle Paul refers to this very text. Romans 10:8 reads: "But what does it say? 'The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart'– that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. For the Scripture says, 'Whoever believes in him will not be disappointed.' For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on him; for 'Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.' How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in him whom they have not heard? How will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!' However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our report?' So faith comes from hearing, and hearing from the word of Christ."

So faith comes from hearing – hearing and yet surviving. This too explains why we are here. Because in the very formula and logic of Romans chapter ten, somehow we heard. Not one of us was at Horeb, but yet we have heard. Someone had to tell us. God spoke, and someone had to speak to us. Therefore there is, as the Word of God makes so very clear, the mandate to go and to tell. If God has spoken, then we do know. If God has spoken, then we are accountable. If God has spoken, it is by mercy and for our good, and if God has spoken, it comes with a commission and a command, which makes a difference in the life of a Christian.

The difference for the church is that we understand what it means to gather together as the ones who by the grace and mercy of God have heard. The church gathers under the authority of the Word. It makes a difference also for a seminary. We are not making this up. Our task is not to go figure out what to teach. Our task is not to figure out where to find meaning in life. It is to be reminded continually that we have heard the voice of God speaking from the fire and have survived, and thus we teach.

This is the mercy of God – to hear and yet survive. It is the mercy by which we live every day and experience every moment and evaluate every truth claim and judge every worldview and preach every sermon. We work and we live under that mercy. One cannot help connecting Deuteronomy 4 – the experience of Israel hearing the Lord God speak from the midst of the fire and yet surviving – with Hebrews chapter one, which in the prologue tells us that God, after he spoke long ago to the fathers and the prophets in many ways, has spoken to us in these last days by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the world. We are here because God has spoken, not only in the fire, but in the Son, in whose name we are gathered and in whose name we serve.

This is the second and final part of the Convocation message given at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary on August 24, 2006 by its president, Dr. Albert Mohler.

Women

BuildingTrust
Vicky Van Andel Ed.

In God's image

It is safe to say that most of us spend a good part of our lives searching for our identity as Christians, and trying to discover what our purpose is in God's Kingdom. Who am I, and what am I here for? Fortunately we get help in our quest for truth in many ways. We can look for answers in the Bible, our most important resource. We are also privileged to listen to preachers every Sunday, and we have access to scholarly reading materials. We can put the ideas together and learn what it is to be fully human and created in the image of God.

I would like to explore the concept of being created in God's image. We use the phrase often. I use it all the time when I talk about gender equality. We are equal as women and men because we are created in God's image. What does that mean to me as a woman?

The Bible presents God primarily as a male figure. This is because ancient language did not have a gender inclusive pronoun, and the Bible was written by men in a male-dominated society. It appears that at one time in ancient history, goddess worship was also common. Gods have been worshipped as both male or female deities in the ancient past, depending on the culture of the time. In whatever way we worship God, God remains the same. We worship humanly, trying to picture God with human minds. From here below we try to describe the God above. However, God is greater than our imagination of Him. God is divine, however we choose to worship. Language cannot fully incorporate God's divine Being.

Nevertheless, being merely human, and a woman, I would like to try to capture in words what it means to be created in God's image. I begin by looking for feminine images of God in the Bible. Researchers, both men and women have done much work on this. For example, my philosopher friend Al Wolters researched scripture passages in which God is compared to a woman. Three such passages are: Deuteronomy 32:18: "You forgot the God who gave you birth," Isaiah 42:14: "But now, like a woman in childbirth, I cry out, I gasp, I pant," and Isaiah 66:13: "As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you." These images help me see that God, presented mostly as male, has feminine qualities I can relate to.

Female theologians are looking for new ways to interpret the Bible. They look at how a perspective on a story changes if women are portrayed as active participants rather than passive bystanders, as is mostly the case. They discovered that women played a bigger role in ancient times than is recorded. They suggest that the Bible reflects the patriarchal time in which it was written and that therefore women are presented as inferior to men. They conclude this is not from God but due to human sin.

Looking at Jesus with new eyes reveals that Jesus, besides having masculine qualities, also displays feminine attributes. For example, Jesus *mothers* children by drawing them close to him and blessing them, he *cares for* the sick and poor, and he *prepares a meal* for his disciples at the Last Supper. He also feeds large groups of his followers.

These feminine images of God as well as the feminine side of Jesus help us understand how women can reflect God's image in their lives.

We can add to the above ideas by looking at the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. Here the spiritual aspects of our being meet the psychological. Author Craig Ballard Millet in her book *In God's Image* explores this connection. She writes that women who want to fully experience the meaning of being created in God's image have to integrate their spiritual and psychological selves. She uses the ancient idea of *archetypes* as a way to recognize ourselves and to learn more about who we are.

An archetype is a set of characteristics that are universally understood. For example, fairy tales have archetypes of wise old women and wicked witches. We can instantly picture such women. The wise woman is good and the witch is bad. The good mother is another example of an archetype. We immediately see her as loving, nurturing, compassionate and caring.

Millet describes seven archetypes of women and matches them to specific women in the Bible. Her goal is to help women recognize themselves in one or more of these archetypes in order to become more complete as image bearers of God.

The seven archetypes are: the father's daughter, the sister, the wise one, the wife, the mother, the daughter and the catalyst. Each archetype has unique qualities. The first three archetypes are independent women, the next three are more relational, and the last, the catalyst, dedicates her life to bring out the best in others, while keeping her identity. All archetypes are equally strong and courageous.

The *father's daughter* is a leader. She is adaptable and enjoys working with men. Ruth and Naomi are the biblical examples. The *sister* is decisive and works well with others. Not all men like her. Here Millett names several biblical women: Miriam, Jael, Lydia, and Judith of the Apocrypha. The *wise woman* finds strength within herself. She is centered and reflective, and has deep intuitive knowledge. Hulda is the biblical example. The *wife* is fulfilled in marriage and committed to her partner. She strives for equality and enjoys both male and female friendships. Eve is the biblical example. The *mother* is responsible for all creation, she gives birth and rears her children. She is connected to those she loves and separation causes her great anguish. Sarah is the example in the Bible.

Millett considers all women to reflect the *daughter* archetype. "Her story is one of process and maturation, and includes childhood, a vulnerable adulthood, and the wise mentor. "She is pilgrimage and journey, integration and wholeness, completion and maturity, faith, hope and healing." The daughter archetype in the Bible is Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Finally, *the catalyst* is a woman who moves in and out of relationships. She has a magnetic personality, affirms people and helps bring about their inner transformation. God's light shines through her. Mary Magdalene is such a woman.

Space does not allow me to elaborate more fully on these archetypes and the biblical examples. Each archetype and woman could fill a column in itself. My intent is to touch on a possible way of looking at all of this. It is just one perspective on understanding who we are as women and our task in life. There are many other ways of course. Knowledge, insight and wisdom can be gleaned from many sources.

Millett suggests each woman can identify with one or two of these archetypes and all women have some qualities of the others. Recognizing these qualities as unique to our individual selves helps us grow more fully into the women God intends us to be.

Are there times in life when it is difficult to reflect God's image? Yes, when our identity is compromised and we cannot express ourselves. Oppressed situations cause us to feel helpless. Yet, such situations can eventually lead to opportunities for change, growth and inner rebirth, leading to strength and gifts we never knew we had.

I end by quoting one of Jesus' parables:

"What woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost'" (Luke 15:8-9).

This parable is mentioned by Millett. It fits with our discussion. It refers to Jesus looking for a lost believer. It also serves as an image of a woman searching for a lost part of herself. She knows something very precious is missing and looks everywhere to find it. When she does, she is happy and shares her joy with others. And so it is to rejoice in our womanhood, just as we are, created in God's image.

Vicky Van Andel is the editor of this column. Anyone who would like to contribute to this column is invited to contact her via e-mail at: vickyv@telus.net

Welcome to my perch
Bert Witvoet

An unforgettable summer

Alice and I had quite a summer as we traveled out west to visit four of our five children and their families. One lives in Calgary, one in Vernon and two in Vancouver. They provide plenty of reasons to make us leave our homestead and our one Ontario son and his family and head for the clear skies of Alberta and the mountains of B.C.

Before we steered our Volkswagen bus too far west into the continent, we stayed in Grand Rapids, Michigan, so I could help cover the proceedings of the CRC Synod 2006 for *The Banner*. However, our stay in GR turned into a bit of a nightmare, as our engine broke down and we had to wait for a rebuilt engine to come from Arkansas. I will spare you the details of how a garage owner there jerked us around and caused us an unreasonably long delay. Suffice it to say that the Lord tested our patience (I think we did quite well on that test, with his help), and he provided us with some very worthwhile experiences. The fact that we enjoyed a lot of wonderful hospitality in G.R., helped us turn a lemon into lemonade.

A joke?

I must tell you about the last day in G.R. – the day we could finally pick up our vehicle and resume our journey. When we arrived at the garage, we found out that one of the mechanics was on the road test-driving our vehicle. So we sat down in the store part of the shop and waited, something we had almost become experts at. After about 20 minutes, a police officer walked in, and asked us whether we were the owners of a blue Westfalia with Ontario license plates. We said, "Yes." He then told us that the vehicle had been reported stolen. Alice and I stared at him in disbelief. "You are joking, right?" we both said. "No, I'm not joking," was the reply. We both laughed.

We told him that the vehicle had been in the repair shop for four weeks (not quite true because for three of the four weeks we sat with an engine-less vehicle in a campsite in Byron Centre, waiting for the rebuilt engine to arrive).

Again I said, "This is a prank, right?" I thought of the fact that several people in GR know us and that one of them may have had a policeman as friend and had been stricken with some sick kind of humor for that day.

"No," answered the cop. "It's not a prank. I am serious. Do you have any idea why someone would report your vehicle stolen?" We said, "No."

We later heard how this ridiculous situation had developed. Apparently the mechanic had driven our bus around for a few blocks and had come to a stop light. Unknown to him, a police cruiser was behind him. At the light, the officer in the cruiser noticed that the brake lights on our Westfalia had not come on. Later on, the mechanic told us that he may have coasted to a stop without applying his brakes. The officer decided to follow our bus and, as he did, he punched our Ontario licence plate number into his computer. The message came back from the Ontario Ministry of Transportation that our vehicle had been stolen – an unlikely scenario since we had purchased the vehicle in Squamish, B.C. a few years earlier, had paid for it, and had owned it ever since without any mishap like a break-in.

Serious business

As soon as the officer got the message of the theft, he called in reinforcements. Four cruisers with flashing lights and screaming sirens suddenly surrounded the hapless mechanic driving our Westfalia. The cops came out of their cruisers with guns drawn, ordered the mechanic out of the vehicle, slapped handcuffs on him and put him in the back of one of the cruisers. Only then did they ask questions.

Our mechanic, who looks kind of scruffy come to think of it, explained that he was test-driving a vehicle for his garage and that the owners were in the shop. He showed the cops his work order. It matched the name on the ownership papers. Convinced that he was telling the truth, they removed his handcuffs, and one of the officers took him back to the garage, where he surprised us with the news that our vehicle had been reported stolen.

The officer asked for my driver's license. He radioed the information to his mate, who was standing guard over our vehicle. The information matched the ownership papers.

Ten minutes later the officer came back into the shop to inform us that the Ontario Ministry had said it was all a mistake. They had attributed the mistake to a computer glitch

By this time, everyone relaxed as the matter had been cleared up. The officer then asked the mechanic if he would go with him and pick up our vehicle. The mechanic had just started on his lunch, and I could tell he was not all that eager to go back. So I volunteered. I was put in the back of the cruiser, behind barred windows, on hard plastic seats that left little room for my knees. Everything was designed to prevent a criminal from doing any damage or from escaping. Alice, who enjoyed herself immensely, waved me off, and I was gone. Twenty minutes later, I was back with the vehicle.

Only in the US

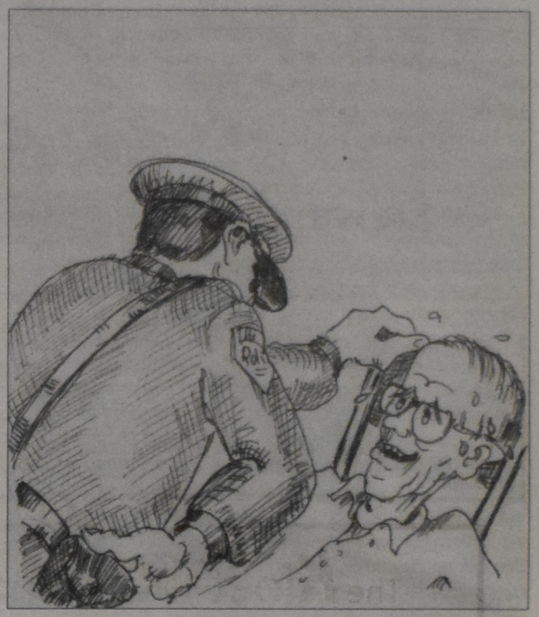
Later that afternoon, we finally resumed our journey out west. On the way, we reflected on that final episode. At first, I thought: only in the United States will they come at you with guns drawn and handcuff you before asking questions. But then I remembered an incident we had heard about in Grace Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids a few Sundays earlier, and we became more understanding of how the police had acted.

Towards the end of the service at Grace, a neighboring pastor had entered the sanctuary to make an announcement about a joint project between his church and Grace CRC. After his announcement, he asked us to pray for a single Mom who had visited his church that morning. This Mom had been terribly distraught and had shared with the pastor and others in the congregation that she had discovered that her 15-year-old son had brought a gun into the house.

She asked him why he had a gun. He told her that he wanted to belong to a gang. And then he added that, if he wanted to become a full-fledged member of that gang, he would have to kill someone. It didn't matter who or why – he had to kill someone. No wonder the woman had been terribly upset and did not know what to do.

During our stay in Grand Rapids we had heard or read that there were about 27 gangs in Grand Rapids. Imagine the violence Grand Rapids police regularly face when dealing with that many gangs who make horrible demands on their members.

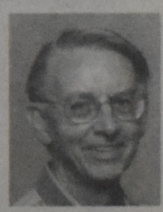
When I recalled that incident as we drove out west,



I began to understand that a police officer in Grand Rapids and other big cities cannot take any chances when confronted with what was reported to be a stolen vehicle. No wonder they had approached the mechanic the way they had. I must add that, when the truth of matter became clear to the police, they apologized profusely to the mechanic and to us as owners. Nevertheless, it all made for a weird and somewhat appropriate end to our involuntary stay in Grand Rapids.

At least we had a few things to talk about when we finally met up with our children in Shuswap Provincial Park near Salmon Arm, B.C.

Above all, we realized that Robert Burns had been right when he wrote: "The best laid plans of mice and men go oft astray." He doesn't say why. A more pious saying has it that "man proposes, but God disposes." That's true, too, but it does not take into account the role that evil plays in this disposition. Evil caused us problems. But our problems were nothing compared to those of the single Mom in Grand Rapids. In all these things, though, the over-arching theme is that God can work out all things for our good. I hope and pray that the single Mom had intervened in time to prevent her son from becoming a gang member. At least she knew where to turn for help.



Bert Witvoet is the former editor of CC, *now retired, who stays active by editing the* Christian Educators Journal *and preaching the occasional sermon. He tries to stay informed by hearing and reading the daily news and Reformed by looking for writers and speakers who can tell the forest from the trees.*

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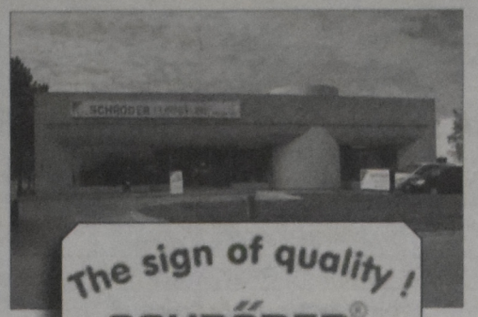

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Classifieds

Thank You

Many, many thanks!

Martin & Jenny Oldengarm wish to thank everyone who sent cards, called us, or joined us to celebrate our 40th Wedding Anniversary and Martin's 65th birthday on Saturday, October 7.

It was, indeed, a most memorable day for us and for our many friends and family members, many of whom went to great lengths and travelled great distances to share the day with us.

We give thanks, above all, to our ever-faithful heavenly Father. Thanks to the generosity of our guests, we received a lot of donations for the Canadian Food Grains Bank, Worldwide Christian Schools and The Gideons ministries!

Birth

Acts 2:39

Peter & Linda Tensen thank the LORD for the safe arrival of their second grandchild:

Zachary David Owen Tensen

born on Oct 18 to proud parents, Ben & Trisha (nee Beal). A nephew for Tim and Jonathan. Twelth great-grandchild for Tine Tensen of Aylmer, second for Doris Morrison of Welland.

Ministry Anniversary

Pastor SID AND JANICE COOPER

plan to celebrate their

50th Anniversary in the Gospel Ministry of the CRC

at First CRC, Sarnia, Ont., **Nov. 26**, at the **10 a.m.** service. Pastor Sid was ordained here, the Coopers celebrated their 25th anniversary in the ministry here and now their 50th.

Let God be praised!

Home address: #214-1285 Sandy Lane, Sarnia ON N7V 4J7
e-mail; sjcooper@rivernet.net

Obituaries

Hoogeveen, The Netherlands - London, Ontario
August 2, 1912 September 26, 2006

HARM BLOEMBERG

was called home to his LORD and Saviour

Beloved husband of the late
Nellie Bloemberg (Vander Pol) 2004

Loving father of:
Anne & Sid VanderHeide, *London*
Ralph & Nancy Bloemberg, *London*
Nela & Mike Couchie, *London*
Corrie Bendall, *London*
Margareth & Roger Baker, *Ailsa Craig*
28 Grandchildren & 11 Great-grandchildren

Praise the Lord, O my soul
I will praise the Lord all my Life;
I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.
Psalm 146

Correspondence: A. VanderHeide
154 Devonshire Ave, London ON N6C 2J1

God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble. Psalm 46

At the hour appointed by him, on October 5, 2006 our LORD answered her prayer and took to himself

JEAN ALTENA (DeJong)

in her 78th year.
Beloved wife of Philip for 54 years.

Cherished mother of Jessica & Douwe VanderMeulen, Eileen & Ed Plantinga, Anita & Harry DeBoer, Margaret & Daryl Miller, Joanne & John DeVries, Bart & Sonya Altena and Esther & Cliff Roukema. Beloved grandmother of 17 grandchildren and 2 great-grandchildren. Dear sister-in-law of Hinke (deceased) and Peter Brouwer (Jane), Wilma & Kees Bosma of Ontario and many relatives in Holland.

Following a private interment with family and close friends, a memorial service was held on Saturday, October 7, 2006.

Correspondence address: P. Altena, 274 Orkney St W
Caledonia ON N3W 1A9

Anniversaries

1956 - November 10 - 2006

A cord of three strands is not quickly broken. Eccl. 4:12b

With thankfulness to our Heavenly Father for his blessings throughout the years, we joyfully announce the **50th Anniversary** of our dear parents, grandparents and great-grandparents:

BILL AND MARGARET BUYS

We pray that the LORD will continue to sustain them and keep them in his care for many years to come.

Congratulations Mom and Dad!
Margo & Tim Janssens
Amanda (Avery), Heather, Timothy, Andrew, Olivia
Bill & Joany – Megan, Erin, Adam
Kathy & Peter Kralt
Greg and Karen (Allison), Michael, Joanna, Laura, Braden
Brian
Carl & Ann
Carl Jr; Christa, Sarah, Rachel, Jessica
Dave & Linda
Caitlin, Hannah, Sylvia, Rebecca, Shannon
Mark & Sandra
Emilee, Natasha, Caleb, Danica
John & Glenna
Madison, Hailey, Luke, Ben, Lydia
Darrell & Christine – Claire, Reuben
Trevor

Home Address: 4271 Village Park Drive,
Beamsville ON L0R 1B8

1956 November 14 2006

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3:5-6

With joy and thankfulness to God we celebrate the **50th Anniversary** of

KLAAS AND JENNY BRINK (nee Zee)

Congratulations Mom & Dad, Opa & Oma!

Kathleen & Brian Van Dam, *Bentley, AB*
Elsie & Rob Sanders, *Bentley, AB*
Harvey & Coby Brink, *Bentley, AB*
Wendy & Randy Ehman, *High Prairie, AB*
Fred & Sandy Brink, *Bentley, AB*
Valerie & Murray King, *Bentley, AB*
14 Grandchildren

Address: Box 617, Bentley AB T0C 0J0

Holland Marsh, 1956 November 14 Barrie, 2006

We wish to announce the **50th Wedding Anniversary** of our parents and grandparents

ANDY and JANE BROUWER (nee DeJong)

Come and celebrate God's goodness to them at an **Open House!**
Saturday, November 25, 2006
2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Tollendale Village
275 Hurst Drive, Barrie, Ontario
Your presence will be your present.

As your children and grandchildren, we thank God for his faithfulness to you and the love he has given you for each other, and for us!

Gary & Leona Brouwer – Tara, Jeff, Tim
Caroline & Ed Dyk – Caitlin, Travis, Justine
Winnie & Bernie Wiebenga – Alex & Mandy, Matt, Sara
Ken & Sherri Brouwer

Home address: Apt#308 - 278 Hurst Drive, Barrie ON L4N 0Z3

Nijeveen, Holland 1956 November 15 St. Thomas, Ontario 2006

With joy and thanksgiving to God, we hope to celebrate the **50th Wedding Anniversary** of our parents and grandparents,

HERMAN & JANE OEGEMA (nee Strijker).

Love from your children and grandchildren.
Margaret & John Zylstra – Jennifer, Derek & Leanne, Jeffrey & Katie, John & Kate, Nathan, *St. Thomas*
Lucy & Fred Zylstra – Janina, Gregory, Brian, Kimberly, Lucette, *St. Thomas*
Bernie & Alison Oegema, *Etobicoke*
Evelyn & Tom Kaastra – Jenna-Lyn, Kristen, Terrence, Gretchen, Elise, Michael, *Aylmer*

To celebrate we will have an **OPEN HOUSE** from 2 - 4 p.m. at St Thomas Community Christian School, 77 Fairview Avenue, on **Saturday, November 18**, 2006 D.V.

Home address: 16 Massey Drive, St. Thomas ON N5R 5M6 519-633-2821

MARIA LENA VREUGDENHIL
(nee **Van Nieuwkerk**)

April 22, 1912 - Sept. 27, 2006

Beloved husband: Dirk Cornelius

The Lord took mom, Oma, great-oma to be with him after a long blessed life. We thank God for a mother who showed us the way to him without a doubt. Mom missed her husband Dirk (1986) and now we remember mom and dad with great memories. We are thankful that God led them to come to Canada in Sept. 1948 with six children.

Adrian & **Trudie** (DeVuyst) *Frankford, Ont*
Lenni & **Paul** Steiginga – Luke, Justin; **Derrick; Harriet** (Scott) – Dylan, Autumn; **Marisa** & **William** Klompmaker – Jared, Jenna; **Lori Ann** & **Peter** Bouwma) – Mami, Kate; **Jim**

Lenie & **Henry†** Rhebergen; *Cobourg, Ont.*
Bonnie – Robert & Nat (Tsui), Maria, John, Brooke; **Judy** & **Dan** Zandstra) – Cameron, Madeline; **Colin** & **Mary-Ellen** (Maybe); **Kim** & **Paul** Triemstra) – Lennea, Lewis; **Philip†**; **Christina** & **Troy** Rhodes) – Isaac; **Patricia** & **Rob** Jones

Marien & **Anne** (Vanderlaan), *Frankford, Ont.*
Ina – Frannie; **Darrell** – Darrell, Rebecca, Jessica, Justin; **Alison** & **Steve** Burton) – Jessie, Felicia; **Brent** & **Stephanie** (Senior) – Emma, Alana, Wyatt, Jacob; **Monique** & **John** Scheerhoorn – Tyler, Blake, Breanne, Madison; **Len**; **Kathy**) – Jacklyn & Justine Vanniejenhuis – Anna, Ryan, Christopher, Fawn, Addison, Tannon; **Yvonne** & **Paul** Wolters – Troy, Riley, Marina; **Patricia** & **Ian** Bonsma) – Cody, Abigail, Mackenzie

Frank & **Doris** (Kloostra); *Frankford, Ont.*
Julie & **Ivan** Wiada – John, Shaina, Andrea; **Derek** & **Deborah** (Visser) – Frank, Talia, Benjamin; **Robert** & **Kari** (Vinther) – Brayden, Kira; **Maria** & **Cory** McPherson – Nathan, Devin; **Frank**; **Mike**

Harry & **Gloria** (Lymburner), **Bettie** (Oosting)†; *Dunnville, Ont.*
Helena & **Jeff** Meyers – Travis, Katheryn, Christian; **Tanya** & **Jon** Heida; **Paul** & **Tara** (Gibbons); **Vanessa**

John† & **Arlene** (Prins), *Ponoka, Alta.*
Darren & **Gayle** (Solomons) – Ethan; **Russell** & **Marcia** (Feitsma) – Davin, Cameron; **Jordan** & **Christina** (Taekema) – Kayla, Chelsea; **Sam** & **Alison** (Knip)

Dick & **Pieta** (Vander Herberg), *Bowmanville, Ont.*
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Gord & **Marilyn** (Wielemaker) *Frankford, Ont*
Curtis & **Mary Beth** (Robertson); **David** & **Sarah** (Geertsma) – Joshua, Noah; **Mark**

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Correspondence: M.A.Lammers, 252 Huffman Rd RR3
Frankford ON K0K 2C0

With joy and thankfulness to our dear LORD, we hope to celebrate the **60th Wedding Anniversary** of our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents.

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(nee **Hoogeveen**)

We are thankful to the LORD for giving us such loving and wonderful parents, grandparents and great-grandparents and pray that he will continue to bless and keep them for us and each other.

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Ken & Cathy Goring	Nicole Eenling	Noel Eenling
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	Pieter Stinson	
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	Tyler Goring	

Correspondence: 3385 Brock St N, Whitby ON L1N 5R5

Classifieds

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Classified /Job Opportunities

Personals

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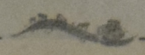
Events

ANNUAL DUTCH CHRISTMAS HYMN SING

Presented by
Zingend Geloven Foundation
The Dutch Christian Radio Broadcast

ON FRIDAY,
NOVEMBER, 17, 2006,
7.30 p.m.

at "Heritage Hall"
Holland Christian Homes
7900 McLaughlin Road S.
Brampton
With participation of
The Liberation Choir under the direction of
Willem Van Suijdam;
Lenny Dykstra, Song Leader;
Rev. Peter Van Egmond, meditation.



Great gift for your frisian friends or relatives!!

Some of our readers asked if there was a video or DVD of the play shown in the a few select areas in Ontario. I recieved a few DVDs from the Netherlands and they are available for our readers at a cost of $30 which includes mailing.

Tryater actress Klaasje Postma thought up and wrote Beppe Tryntsje, a moving and familiar theatrical performance about an elderly woman. She wrote down the stories of her 92-year-old mother which have lead to a very successful location production.

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Job Opportunities

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Check out our website for a full job description at www.bethelcrc.com.
Interested applicants are asked to mail their resume to
Bethel CRC,
345 Elizabeth St E., Listowel, ON. N4W 2P7
or email to office@bethelcrc.com

BELLEVILLE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
an interdenominational school
with a diverse family base is seeking an enthusiastic, visionary
Principal Teacher
for the 2007-2008 school year, (Administration & Teaching). BCS is a JK - Grade 8 school with an enrolment of approximately 100 students from a family base of 50 and a faculty of 4 full time and 4 part time teachers.
Qualified individuals should send their resume and a statement of their philosophy of Christian Education by November 17th to:

Harold Fledderus, Board Vice-Chair
Belleville Christian School
18 Christian School Road, R.R.#5
Belleville, ON, K8N 4Z5
Phone: 613-962-7849 Fax: 613-962-6440
Email: bellevillechristianschool@yahoo.com

WOODLAND CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL
is inviting applications for the position of
teaching Principal
effective August 1, 2007.

Woodland Christian High School is an interdenominational community of 200 students and 16 teachers, located in newly upgraded facilities in a beautiful rural setting just east of Kitchener, Ontario, Canada. It is currently in its 30th year of operation. The principal is part of a dynamic administrative team within a very supportive and growing school community.

If you would like to learn more about Woodland Christian High School, you are invited to visit Woodland's website at www.woodland.on.ca.

Applicants should include:
- a 'Statement of Faith' which describes their walk with the Lord and the educational implications of that relationship.
- a one to three page attachment demonstrating how their skills, experience and values relate to their *Christian character, curriculum development and delivery, educational philosophy and vision, leadership and management skills, planning and evaluation* and *community relations.*
- three references

Applications and inquiries may be directed to:
The Search Committee, Woodland Christian High School, 1058 Spitzig Road, Breslau, ON, N0B 1M0 or search@woodland.on.ca

Applications will be received until November 30, 2006.

Our Mission : *Equipping Students for lives of Christian Service*

Please see Page 22 for more job opportunities

Job Opportunities / Advertising

Saskatoon Christian School
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Principal

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- a dedication to nurturing and maintaining a positive relationship between the Saskatoon Society for Christian Education (SSCE) and the Saskatoon Public School Board
- see school website (http://www.saskatoonchristianschool.ca) for a more complete description

Duties to commence August, 2007.
Interested persons should direct inquiries to:
Klaas de Rooy, SSCE Board Chairman
Email: klaasderooy@shaw.ca
Fax: (306) 249 – 3082
Office phone: (306) 249 - 3035 Cell phone: (306) 221 - 7900
433 Birch Crescent
Saskatoon, SK. S7N 2K2

TIMOTHY CHRISTIAN SCHOOL – Barrie, Ontario

Due to the retirement of our principal Leo Smit, TCS is inviting applications for

Principal

beginning August 1, 2007. Timothy is seeking an experienced, visionary and enthusiastic leader who can direct and promote the cause of Christian education in the rapidly growing Barrie community.
TCS serves a diverse interdenominational Christian community and offers a JK – Grade 8 program to over 200 students. The school operates in a new, spacious facility that has room to expand. Presently part of the school is used by Unity Christian High.

Qualified applicants should forward their resume details, along with a clear statement of their philosophy of Christain Education to:

Dr. Rebecca Verhaege (Search Committee Chair) at dr.rebecca@rogers.com
or to the school.

Timothy Christian School
750 Essa Rd
Barrie, ON L4N 9E9
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lsmit@timothychristianschool.ca
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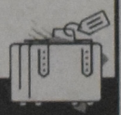

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Principal

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Lethbridge, Alberta

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Mr. Corny VanDasselaar
Chairman, Principal Search Committee
***RR-8-41-3,* Lethbridge AB T1J 4P4**
Phone: 403-320-5987 / Fax: 403-320-6587
Email: benchmark@shockware.com

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Please visit www.crcna.org for more information. The process will remain open until an appointment is made. For consideration, submit your resume and a cover letter (electronic preferred) by **December 31, 2006** to:

Director of Home Missions Search Committee
c/o Director of Personnel
Christian Reformed Church in North America
2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE
Grand Rapids MI 49560-0500
Fax: 616.224.5896
Email: apply@crcna.org

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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Nov 8 The 2006 Annual *Church and Charity Law* Seminar Hosted by: Carters Professional Corp. 8:45 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. at Young-Nak Korean Presbyterian Church, 650 McNicoll Avenue, **Toronto**, Ontario. Cost: Early Registration fee is $15.00 per person (includes GST). $20.00 after Nov 1.

Nov 8 Redeemer's annual Bernard Zylstra lecture series, **Ancaster**. Featured speaker - Dr. Jonathan Chaplin. Theme: Speaking from Faith in Public Life. Public events/lectures throughout the day. See ad last issue.

Nov 10 Ambassadors Christian Male Chorus, **Bowmanville** Rehoboth CRC. 8:00 p.m. Contact: L. Hellinga at 905-623-6943. .

Nov 11 Ambassadors Christian Male Chorus, **Trenton** CRC 7:30 pm. Contact: S. Bach 613-965-6618.

Nov 12 Ambassadors Christian Male Chorus, **Newmarket** CRC 6:00 pm. For further information contact Harold de Haan 905-389-2104 or Rev. Arie VanEek 905-689-5266.

Nov 15 Ambassadors Christian Male Chorus, **Hamilton** First CRC 8:00 p.m. Contact: A. VanEek 905-689-5266..

Nov 17 Zingend Geloven Foundation presents the Annual Dutch Christmas Hymn Sing, 7.30 p.m. at the "Heritage Hall" of Holland Christian Homes, **Brampton**, Ont. With participation of The Liberation Choir, Willem Van Suijdam, Director; Lenny Dykstra, Song Leader; Rev. Peter Van Egmond, meditation.

Nov 17 Ambassadors Christian Male Chorus **Chatham** First Presbyterian Church, Fifth St, 7:30 p.m. Contact: H. Hystek 519-351-0684

Nov 18 The Lighthouse Annual Fundraising Dinner and Silent Auction at Villa Colombo in **Toronto.** Reservations required 416-535-6262

Nov 19 Ambassadors Christian Male Chorus with duet: Michael & Laura Pin. **Drayton** Reformed Church, 7: 30 p.m. Contact: E. Walter 519-638-2953.

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China, North Korea border

Despite velvet sanctions, North Korea continues to talk tough

Harry der Nederlanden

Although both China and South Korea have agreed to impose sanctions on North Korea for violating the denuclearization treaty and defying the international community with its nuclear bomb test, neither is expected to squeeze Kim Jong-il very hard. The sanctions called for by the UN would freeze some North Korean assets, ban some travel and outlaw the import and export of specific materials relating to nuclear weapons technology.

Recently Anthony Banbury of the UN World Food Program (WFP) warned that North Korea is facing another hunger winter and will need many millions in food aid. Yet, last year Kim, in a show of independence, ordered the UN and other aid programs out of the country. So there is very little aid happening now as the country goes into another winter having suffered poor harvests.

Since 1995, the US alone has given the country $1.1 billion in aid, 60 percent of it in food. But it cut its aid when North Korea ordered the WFP to close five regional offices that supervised distribution. There have been repeated reports that food aid was being diverted from those it is meant to help.

Both China and South Korea have given large amounts of food aid above and beyond that given by the WFP, but they, too, have cut such aid recently. The UN has not restricted such aid, but North Korean officials have imposed conditions that make food aid more difficult.

According to the *Lehrer Newshour*, South Korea will by and large continue business as usual with the North. It is even continuing work on the Kaesong Industrial Park and a vacation resort in the North, both begun under the so-called Sunshine Policy. Nevertheless, North Korea deemed it necessary to issue a stern warning to its southern benefactor.

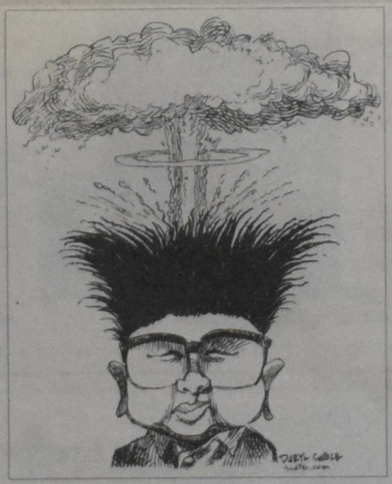
"If North-South relations collapse due to reckless and imprudent sanctions against us, the South Korean authorities will be fully responsible for it and will have to pay a high price," said a belligerent statement carried by the North's official Korean Central News Agency.

China support for serious sanctions is also doubtful. A story in *Time Magazine* describes the importance of trade with North Korea to one of China's large northern cities, Dandong (pop. 2.4 mllion). Most of China's annual trade amounting to about $1.6 billion passes through this city. It isn't likely, says the writer, that China will do a great deal to impede the trade that this northern city depends on. Border inspections, moreover, tend to be rather cursory, more symbolic than effective.

A great deal of commentary, not only blames the U.S. for having caused the crisis by its hard-nosed stance over toward the repressive regime, it also puts the onus on the U.S. for sweet-talking it back into the fold. In an essay printed in *Slate*, foreign policy columnist Anne Applebaum asks a pertinent question:

"If it is within China's power to rescue or destroy Kim Jong-il, then how, exactly, did North Korea's nuclear-weapons program become in any sense the responsibility of the United States? Unlike Beijing, Washington has no diplomatic levers it can use in North Korea, no trade relations of any significance, and certainly no shared border."

The U.S. administration has been almost universally condemned for its unilateralism in the recent past, why is it now being condemned for insisting that talks with North Korea be conducted in the framework of Six-party Talks? Why is it that the U.S. and not China is held responsible for bringing North Korea back into line?



Staying healthy during flu season

Canada, like the rest of the world, is experiencing a delay in receiving the flu vaccine this year due to production difficulties in developing the vaccine.

What this means is the flu vaccine will be available at the end of October or the beginning of November – about one month later than usual.

Although there is a delay, it's important to note that there is no shortage of the vaccine. Everyone who wants to get a flu shot will receive one free of charge.

This year, local public health units will be working closely with health care providers in their communities to make sure flu shots are provided first to people at high risk of getting the flu. This includes the elderly, those of any age living in long-term care homes or other chronic care facilities, and adults and children with chronic health conditions.

The flu shot will then be available to anyone over the age of six months who lives, works or goes to school. Getting a flu shot will once again be as easy as booking an appointment with your family doctor or at a local flu clinic.

You can call your local public health unit or your family doctors for information on the availability of the flu vaccine in your community.

There are things you can do to reduce the chance of getting the flu until you're able to get a flu shot. The main ways you can prevent passing on or catching the flu is to:

- Wash your hands with soap and warm water for 15-20 seconds. Do this often or at least after every trip to the bathroom
- Cover your mouth with a tissue or arm sleeve when coughing or sneezing
- Practise healthy living habits such as eating well and exercising to build up your immune system.

News Digest

Genocide deniers

The French parliament voted to make it a crime to deny that the slaughter of Armenians that took place in Turkey in 1915 was a genocide. It, of course, is patterned after laws that make holocaust denial a hate crime.

In Turkey, on the other hand, one can end up in jail for saying that the brutal "relocation" that killed millions was a deliberate act of genocide. The Turkish writer Orhan Pamuk was put on trial for even writing about the event – and was promptly awarded a Nobel prize for literature by the ever-political Nobel committee.

There are, of course, not just genocide deniers; there are also genocide makers. Quite a number of historians would love to see the migration of Europeans to other continents such as Australia and North and South America labeled as genocides as well. The long march called the Trail of Tears that killed hundreds of Cherokees has been put up for nomination. To deny that it took place would probably mark you as a racist or a fool. But why on earth make the denial or affirmation of historical events a criminal matter?

Evolution in Christian schools

Quebec wants to put the screws on Christian schools in the province to make them teach evolution. It would, of course, be foolish and irresponsible for a school not to teach the theory of evolution – critically – seeing that it is the dominant model in biology. I suspect, however, that this is not what the bureaucrats have in mind.

Strange, isn't it: at a time when the grand narratives of Enlightenment progress have been crumbling under the onslaughts of postmodern criticism, the grand narrative of evolutionism still merits the protection of the state.

Some seem to feel that Christians won't treat their animals with proper respect unless they're taught we share a common ancestry. Christians, on the other hand, fear that if we treat one another like animals.... Oh, but we already do that.

Mobocracy in Hungary

In 1956, 50 years ago, Hungary was torn by the violence of an abortive revolution against its Communist taskmasters. Hundreds lost their lives in the rebellion and hundreds more were executed later. Thousands fled the country, many to Canada.

Ironically, on the anniversary of the revolution the streets of Budapest are again filled with violence and rebellion. This time it is street mobs trying to bring down an elected government – and they are being egged on by leaders from the right. Many of the demonstrators feel that the present P.M. Ferenc Gyurcsany, who belonged to the communist party as a youth, heads a socialist party that carries on the heritage of the former communists. Gyurcsany was caught on tape admitting that he'd lied to win the last elections.

In the process, however, democracy is threatened by mobocracy. Of course, the ancients would say that at last democracy is showing its true colors.

Quest for invisibility

While some scientists have been working on developing new fuels and new cures for old diseases, others have been busy with more important things: an invisibility cloak. A group has actually figured out how to bend light around an object, like water flowing around a stone, rendering the object invisible.

Actually we already have something like that – it's called television. It lets us see things far off and fantastic and makes us miss what's right in front of our noses.